



**WOMAN'S STRUGGLE IN ACTIVISM, SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY AND  
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN KAT COIRO'S "AND WHILE WE  
WERE HERE" FILM**

**A THESIS**



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**SURABAYA**

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**Faculty of Humanities**

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**2016**

## DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any university. And to the best of this candidate's knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published written by other person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Surabaya, 30 December 2015



Sarah Istiqomah

**I dedicate this thesis to my beloved mother,**

**To all women and all mothers in the world....**

**Approved to be examined**

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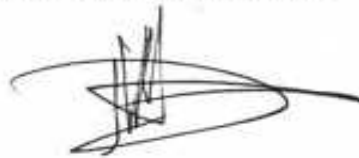
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But I realize that everything should be passed on and if we do not make any change to improve our life, then it still stays the same and there is no use to live in this world at all. That is actually what I try to do. I do not try to be the best, but I try to make my last time in university be the most unforgettable moment for me in searching knowledge as far as I can. I also learned to be more independent in doing anything since I attended in the university. I am conscious that life is not about live or death but it is all about struggle to know the meaning of life and the essence of living in this world actually considered as a form of great dedication and submission to our master of universe, Allah SWT.

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**“Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.”**

**-Aeschylus**

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## ABSTRACTION

This article uses Kat Coiro's movie *And While We Were Here* to tease out three important aspects of woman struggle in terms of activism, spiritual philosophy and experiential learning. Spiritual activism itself cannot be separated with the process philosophy of religious in response to the mistakes of classical theism. As implied by the word from which it takes its name, process philosophy states that all life is in process, changing and developing, growing and dying, and that even the divine power participates in changing life. Through an examination of woman struggle in activism and spiritual motivation that manifested in movie and it also explains the impact in how spiritual philosophy affects Jane, as the main character, in her relationship to the environment surrounds her as it becomes an active process how women could independently seeks out the meaning of life through her writing activities. This study applies qualitative method; therefore, the writer will analyze the issues by elaborating dialogues, events, and conflicts in the movie. The writer applies women spiritualism theory by since its topics related with woman activism and spiritual philosophy. Besides, the writer also applies narrative and non-narrative theory by Louis Giannetti. By applying the theory, the writer finds that spiritualism encourages the liberation for women to choose her destiny.

**Keywords:** Spiritual activism, woman struggle, spiritual motivation, spiritual philosophy, experiential learning



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of The Study

Women's issue largely diversified and becomes more developed from time to time to be analyzed. Interestingly, in the case of women studies, spiritual issues also take apart and cannot be separated from its everyday life. The most important thing that needs to be noticed concerning the issue of woman spiritual activism is that it was rooted from its meaning as a form of social or ecological transformational activity rooted in a spiritual belief system or a set of spiritual practices as so many historical movements tried to enunciate their own distinctive identity for being heard. In order to understand the spiritualist movement's effect on the women's right movement, it is required at first to understand spiritualism.

As Canda (1997) has noted, defining spirituality is a difficult task and current definitions suffer from a number of deficiencies. This definition acknowledges the reality that all constructs including spirituality exist within, and are informed by, a particular social network. This is accomplished by giving a more specific meaning to David R. Hodge the term spiritual tradition.“ While religion, defined as an institutionalized set of beliefs and practices (Canda, 1997; Carroll, 1997), is one manifestation of a spiritual tradition, other less formalized spiritual traditions are common. For example, the new age movement informs its adherents' spirituality through certain widely accepted, non-institutionalized,

beliefs and practices. Thus, the designation spiritual tradition“ is a broader, more inclusive term than religion.

Spiritualism, which is the practice communication with the dead, has existed in Ancient Rome, and quite possibly before. Many spiritualists believed that anyone, regardless of status, education, or sex, possesses some degree of mediumship, i.e., an ability to receive communications from the spirit world. It frequently held that people did not have to be conscious of their communications with the spirit world to receive religious knowledge from the spirits. Since the spiritualists believed women to have the same rights as men, the foremost cause championed by all who believed spiritualist ideology was woman's right. Spiritualist ideology held that every human possessed a soul, and had a perfect right to control over their soul, both in this world and in the next (Alter, 176). Therefore, while not all feminists were spiritualists, all of the adherents to spiritual ideology advocated the women's rights movement. According to its history, people believing the spiritualist movement's ideology meant believing that women both possessed souls and had sovereign power over them.

However, it has to be noticed here that in spite of their differences with traditional Christianity, including the central role that they assigned women, with a few exceptions, most spiritualists practiced spiritualism as an essentially Christian religion. Although many outside the movement attacked it as Anti-Christian, most spiritualists did retain a belief in salvation through Christ (Carroll, cited in Alter, p. 177).

The close connection of spiritualism in women's movement can be established by spiritualist ideology's championship of women's rights, which created a situation whereby all who believed spiritualist ideology had then to believe in women's rights, as well as the overlap between the spiritualist leadership and the women's right leadership. Spiritualists, indeed, bore the brunt of public resistance to women speaking in public for the women's movement since female trance mediums led the way for women to be accepted as public speakers (Alter, p. 168).

Spiritualists felt that women, half of all humanity, had been deprived of their right to control their own persons by the ties of the church, state, and society and that situation had to be rectified to allow women that freedom. Women spiritualists were the first group to break these restrictions against women speaking publicly en masse. Their work paved the way for women's rights reformers to speak publicly, although through the practice of women speaking in public, even in trance, continued to be controversial through 1860s and 1870s, and even beyond. At spiritualist conventions, women's rights were not simply one reform plank in the platform, they were the needed reform (ibid.182).

In fact, spiritual activism itself interconnected with the process philosophy of religious in response to the mistakes of classical theism. As implied by the word from which it takes its name, process philosophy states that all life is in process, changing and developing, growing and dying, and that even the divine power participates in changing life.



Human and other beings are not things (substances or essences) situated in empty space, as has often been thought by philosophers and scientists, but are active processes ever in relation. Prior to deconstruction and acknowledging a debt to Buddhism, process philosophy understands that because all beings are always changing, there can be no essential or substantial self or thing. For process of philosophy, the self is relational, social, embodied, and embedded in the world.

Feminism provides the analysis of gender imbalances and sexist practices, and the exploration of sexism's implications in other forms of oppression. Feminists continue to be the only people putting forward critiques of gender, sexist forms of oppression and their relation to world politics and environmental abuse (Schmah, p.24).

When women decide to choose her destiny by being an activist, however, there is something that later could benefit them a lot by leading them to reflect on their experiences more than they would especially in giving a valuable outlet for the verbalization of their feelings. It can be employed by empowering non-conventional education regarding to spiritual and gender issues, non-violence and a respect for self and life processes since it aims to prioritize work that increased the reach of alternative ideas, values and practices, expanded public understanding of human rights, feminist and justice issues, and the biological foundations of life and conservation.

As the writer read some similar discussion about women value in voicing their rights in some literature review, the writer found the importance of leading

role in a different way for women. First, Louise Duxbury expresses it as her aims as giving women the space and support for positions of leadership, working with rural women who she says are isolated but effective leaders who could do more if they were more supported. The second one is suggested the need for women to go beyond their 'comfort zone', to overcome their strong conditioning against leadership, except being ambitious and powerful, women had to overcome their fears of being overbearing and domineering, and their conditioning against assertiveness. When the implications of these gender constructions remain invisible, action on social and environmental issues can only address the most blatant of problems. Activism will be drastically lacking in broad analysis and holistic strategy (Schmah, p.36).

*And While We Were Here* film is intended to be the writer's choice for propose of the study. An indie movie woman director, Kat Coiro, directed it and it was released it in 2013. She was born 33 years ago in Manhattan, USA, and also awarded as winning film director, writer and producer whose films have played at festivals worldwide, including at Tribeca, The Los Angeles Film Festival and Cannes. Cairo attended Carnegie Mellon University and The Moscow Art Theatre for history and directing. Coiro also accepted as a fellow at the American Film Institute Conservatory before she left to pursue a professional career in film and television (ID, 2012).

In short, it tells the tale of neglected wife, Jane (Kate Bosworth), who falls for a bohemian American youth, Caleb (Jamie Blackley), when her emotionally remote player husband, Leonard (Iddo Goldberg), invited to perform in a concert

in Naples. The film is the latest in tradition of stories about travellers whose lives transformed by Italy. The writer finds that spiritual ideology presented with Jane's will to choose her own destiny after she found that it was quite ineffective to maintain her relationship with his husband. She decided to go by herself to any place in Ischia she wanted to.

Later the writer finds some similarities in previous studies that explained about woman struggle in activism, there are some reasons why the writer considers bringing this movie as her research topic. First, there was research explained more about women activism using spiritual philosophy perspective in case of experiential learning. Second, after the writer watched the movie, the writer found philosophical significance and spiritual perspectives that are going to be used as the approach of analyzing this movie connected to the theory that the writer found match. It has presented in the form of unintended spiritual journey with her husband to Ischia especially when she started to listen to the tape recorder. In case of women struggle the writer found it in a way that Jane classified herself as the outsider who knows nothing about life. Third, it is about writer's attention toward women's philosophy that is depicted in the movie and voices domination in society was hardly noticeable and respected for so many years.

There are also several aspects to be considered, which are about narrative and non- narrative aspects as an interpretation of film, which can be seen from multiple directions. We have to look at the dialogue, story, plot, setting and the characters in narrative aspects, while non-narrative is about cinematic

representation like costume, color tone, properties and performance. In this research, the setting of the film becomes the most dominant point that is used because it is one of the ways to understand.

## **1.2 Statement of The Problem**

1. How the concept of woman activism and her spiritual motivation portrayed in movie?
2. What are the main character main issues?

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Based on statement of the problem above, this study aims to analyze how the concept of woman and the spirituality is depicted in movie and how the power of her spiritual belief eventually gives impact to her attitude toward the society surrounds her.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study provides discussion related to woman and activism issue as it brought two aims to give an explanation to the readers in understanding the concept of woman activism and spiritual motivations toward society especially by her spiritual power that can be considered as the role model of a leader for the

society mobilization, her initiative consciousness toward the development of civilization and also as the stabilizer unity of human nature. The writer hoped that this research will also enhance other students knowledge about women activism, about its ethical issues and living practice depicted in movie and also the power of central character reaching her dreams to be more independent and respected in the developments of society that commonly seems hard to be understood as it brings moral spirit to recover the mutual integrity among humans in understanding nature and its tentative motions.

### **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

In analyzing film *And While We Were Here* by Kat Coiro, the writer will use feminist theory about woman activism and spiritual philosophy according to Frances Swiney, a prominent British suffragist and social purity activist that wrote a number of influential feminist works in the early 20th century. Combining with scientific/eugenic ideas and spiritualism, she argued that women represented a higher stage of evolutionary development than men and that the human species was in the process of moving beyond differentiated sex into an androgynous, though essentially feminine, being. Unfortunately, women's spiritual ascent was threatened by men's carnality. Under the umbrella of spiritualism, the movement granted women an active voice in social and political reform movements under the protection that they were not voicing their own personal views, but that of the spirits. The spiritualist medium's parlor made a perfect place for socially active

women to expound on issues such as abolition and women's rights within the protection of the domestic circle. Naturally, this doctrine appealed to Northern social activists with feminist and abolitionists making up a significant number of spiritualists.

Though embraced by social activists, the idea of women lecturing during the antebellum era horrified conservative Americans. One man even went so far as to declare that he would rather see his beloved daughter dead than see her join the "female croakers" giving lectures. Despite spiritualism's growth in the North, spiritualism was never as popular in the South. Though spiritualist circles did emerge in the South before the Civil War, particularly in New Orleans for the large part, the conservative Southerners could not abide with a religion that counted abolitionists and feminists within its ranks. Based on its basic definition, woman activism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women through implementing their worth in leadership role or agent of social movement.

## **1.6 Method of the Study**

Because film is the object source that will be analyzed, so the writer uses descriptive analysis that relates to the analysis as it also considered looking through narrative and non-narrative aspects. It focuses on the story itself, setting,

costume, properties, color tone and performance. It used not only as supporting material but also as the data to answer the statements of the problems.

### **1.7 Scope and Limitation**

To keep the study in the expected field, the topic of the analysis about the movie *And While We Were Here* directed by Kat Coiro focuses on the idea and representation of woman activism and its spiritual motivation. As there are two main questions in this study that first, it consists of the concept of woman activism especially in writing for its experience. Second, it will focus on the impact of her ethical attitude and struggle toward her relationships with society. The other subjects outside the limitation will not be considered as the process of the study analysis.

## **1.8 Definition of Key Terms**

There are several terms used in this research that may not be familiar and is commonly used in our daily life. So the definitions of these terms are also provided here to help readers to understand the research.

**Activism:** An action on behalf of a cause or action that goes beyond what it is perceived to be conventional or routine. The action might be door-to-door canvassing, alternative radio, public meetings, rallies, or fasting. The cause might be women's rights, opposition to a factory, or world peace. (Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice: 2007)

**Spiritualism:** An activity that abandons the textbooks, takes the learner outside their comfort zone for a more memorable lesson, and elaborates the experience of meaning, connection and joy, often informed by philosophy and religion.

**Mediumship:** The process whereby a human instrument, known as a medium or channel used by one or more discarnate, spirit personalities for the purpose of: presenting information, verifiable or otherwise causing so-called paranormal activities to occur, channels forth certain types of energies, manifesting themselves for objective examination and/ or identification.

**Experiential learning:** The process through which students develop knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences outside a traditional academic setting. It encompasses a variety of activities including internships,



service learning, undergraduate research, study abroad, and other creative and professional work experiences.

Spirituality: It typically defined in terms of a ~~p~~ersonal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, about meaning, and about relationship to the sacred or ~~t~~ranscendent”.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The concept of woman activism has been analyzed with many theories and ideas. In this case, the writer wants to conduct the theory of woman activism that can be related into the concept of spiritualism. This research aims to analyze the concept of woman activism and its spiritual motivation that represented by the main character, Jane in *And While We Were Here* movie directed by Kat Coiro. Considering the concept of woman activism, however, cannot be simultaneously satisfying for either the reader or the writer if the theory of spiritualism is not included. Therefore, the writer uses spiritualism theory by Emily Alter (2001) and activism theory by Svirsky (2010) that enables the reader to gain better understanding about the concept of woman spiritual activism offered by the main character in the movie.

##### 2.1.1 Spiritualism and Activism Theory

In using spiritualism and activism theory, it is important to see the relation between the women, history reflected on the literary work, and other things

related to it. Since the definition of activism itself used as the object of the study is related to spiritual activity in terms of woman activism in writings. Yet, the relationship between spiritualism and woman's activism depend on how women as an entity being looked by the component of their inner-voice.

It is crucial to consider voice and its implications for individual experiences of power in social movements. Individual women can most accurately convey the specific realities and nuances of their experiences (Dugan & Reger, 2006; Krumer-Nevo, 2009). The collective voice of the movement as a whole can conceal the heterogeneity of experience and the individual voices within; in addition, the unequal distribution of power within movements suppresses some voices and privileges others (Dugan & Reger, 2006; Grahame, 1998). Voice goes beyond merely having the opportunity to express oneself; it demands full citizenship and visibility in social movements, which translates into active participation in decision-making and opportunities to contribute recommendations and solutions (Dugan & Reger, 2006; Grahame, 1998).

Activism imposes new regimes of succession of ideas and affective variations in the power of action (Alter, 163). From these descriptors, activism can encompass a wide diversity of actions to increase or change our consciousness. It is the conscious utilization and mobilization of our life energy towards change for a more just world: It ~~is~~ about affecting or transforming the world in a way which is better, can never fully be agreed or decided upon.

Another theory which is offered by Tatiana Kontou (2009) in her book *Spiritualism and Womens Writing from the finde Siecle to the neo-Victorian* this theory implicitly shows that women's writing's also related with spiritualism and psychical research. It generally agreed that the modern spiritualist movement began on April 1, 1848, in the village of Hydesville, New York, when two teenaged sisters, Margaret and Kate Fox, claimed that they had communicated with the ghost of a man murdered at the house years before their family moved in. Reports of this event first appeared in the New York Tribune and subsequently in other newspapers in America and Europe. The core belief of spiritualism was that the living could communicate with the dead through the help of a medium endowed with a supernatural gift during mysterious and entertaining séance phenomena. Within the late Victorian counterculture of spiritualism, a number of women and men gained renown and authority as skilled mediums.

Generally, spiritualism has closely related to the feminist movements and both have the same goal, they want to free woman from the oppressive gender roles. The differences among those ideologies founded in the way that spiritualist reformers were universally abolitionists, since they ascribed to African Americans the same individual moral autonomy they ascribed to all people.

Spiritualist reformers differed from other abolitionists in their placement of women rights as a primary goal along with the abolition of slavery. For most abolitionists, woman's emancipation was only one in a series of reforms that were subordinate to the abolition of slavery. The disbandment of slavery was their primary goal' other goals, including women's rights, could be compromised in its

pursuit. Svirsky (2010) in her article *Defining Activism* as the approach. Based on its basic definition, woman activism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women through implementing their worth in leadership role or agent of social movement.

The study of spirituality goes deeply into the heart of every matter and extends far beyond the physical world of matter. Spirituality connects women with the profoundly powerful and divine force that is present in this universe. Whether the purpose are looking for worldly success, inner peace, or supreme enlightenment, no knowledge can propel them to achieve their goals and provide as effective a plan for living as does spiritual knowledge.

The spiritualist movement, which arose in 1848, reached a high point in the mid-1850s, and slowly petered out through the 1890's, was ideologically intertwined with the reform movements of the 1850s and 1860s, and shared some overlapping leadership. The two most dominant reform movements of the time, including temperance, communitarianism, phrenology, mesmerism, as well as several other reforms were touted by the reformers of diet, dress and medical practice. The spiritualist movement was tied up in all of these movements, but it had an especially strong connection to the women rights movement. The spiritualist movement, as essentially detrimental as it was to the rational basis of the women's rights movement, did in fact advance the cause of women's rights.

The close connection of spiritualism to the women's rights movement can be established by the presence of spiritualist ideology's championship of women's rights, which created a situation whereby all who believed spiritualist ideology had then to believe in women's rights, as well as the overlap between the spiritualist leadership and the women's spiritual leadership. Spiritualists indeed bore the brunt of public resistance to women speaking in public for the women's movement since female trance medium led the way for women to be accepted as public speakers.

Some of the issues that are in front of the position of spiritualism and women rights movement are equal rights for education and voting, reproductive rights, abortion rights, protection against sexual harassment and domestic violence and equal opportunities to control over their soul, both in this world and in the next. Spiritualist's ideology also held that everyone has some degree of ability to channel the dead, i.e. be a medium. Both of these beliefs combined to create a religion/ideology with a pronounced emphasis on individual inspiration. Spiritualists felt that women, half of all humanity, had been deprived of their right to control their own persons by the ties of church, state, and society, and that situation had to be rectified to allow women that freedom.

To put it simple, the distinctions, the labels male and female are declared to be quite worthless. They are declared worthless by a female who becomes enlightened, proving her very point, and this point is also emphasized by all Buddhist philosophies that enlightened mind is beyond gender, cannot be

labeled ‘\_male’ or ‘\_female’. Therefore, it makes no sense to claim that females cannot attain enlightenment.

### **2.1.2 From Italian Neo Realism Post War Cinematic Style to American Neo Realism**

The term applied to post-war filmmakers working to create films that closely resembled real life is “neorealism”. Its origin as a literary designation was associated with twentieth-century figures such as Alberto Moravia (Marcus, 18). The term itself is problematic, as many critics and film theorists have been unable to agree on a concrete definition. This is mostly because neorealism did not adhere to prescribed guidelines and did not apply to a particular “school” of artists. Further, it is more than just a stylistic description; it is specific to the events of the Resistance and the post-war reconstruction of Italy. As described by Milicent Marcus, neorealism is a special case in which the relationship between style and implied worldview is so deep and morally binding that the modification of one amounts to the virtual betrayal of the other. For many critics, it is primarily a moral statement, that leading one critic to the conclusion that it was never an aesthetic code at all, but strictly an ethical one.

*And While We Were Here* movie has its familiarity with people’s nation, bounds, lineages, wars, social economic and themes that associated with romanticism. In this context, the director, Kat Coiro wants to emerge her life in past time with her grandma through this cinematic medium. Therefore, Jane, as

the main character that Coiro puts in this movie is the portraying of her stories and in fact, this movie totally reflecting her interpretation about her past life with her grandma. This movie also explicitly reveals some sort of repetition that has been made through the experience of romantic love affair between the man and the woman, which were recalling scenes from Roberto Rossellini's film *Rome, Open City*, when it was filmed in their neighborhood. Rossellini along with Vittorio De Sica was pioneers of Neo Realism. Their films brought dynamism in form that was countered by the self-reflection of their content that put Italian cinema at the center of the post-war world. Here was launched the careers of Rossellini, Fellini, Pasolini, Bertolucci, Visconti, Zavattini and De Sica, who described the post war years as a beautiful time –Beautiful for artists, but ugly for Italians.”

Right after the war, passions were so strong right after the war that they really pushed us, the audience. They forced towards this kind of film truth. And this truth was transfigured by poetry, and lyricism. It was because of its lyricism that Neo-Realism so captured the world, because there was poetry in our reality. Neorealism can be considered as the father of Italian comedy, even if the latter was born precisely as a reaction against neorealism as it tried to restore the dramatic and authentic face of the Italy of those years and its comedy began in a rather false way. (Marcus, 393)

Another example of the poems and transfiguration of lyrics that associated with neorealism are also founded here in the scenes where Jane and Caleb met and introduced each other. While Caleb was asking Jane from where she was coming and who her husband is he tries to make slapstick to entertain her. He said,



*“What’s the difference between a viola and a coffin? A coffin has a dead person on the inside. Cause viola players are dead, no? Why is a viola solo like premature ejaculation? Because even though you know it’s coming, there’s nothing you can do about it.” (00:17:21)*

Caleb’s statement implicitly denotes satire to Jane’s husband, Leonard as he knew quite enough about how he actually looks like and his presence is actually absent-minded. Then, Caleb also cited the poem that was narrated by Vittoria Colonna:

*“Love teaches me to feed on flames and tears, to re-enslave my heart each time, love free his noble face from that heavy disdain.” (00:21:58)*

Similarly, it reflects to the reason that there wasn’t even more American neorealism in Hollywood is that another form of realism method acting was coming to the studios. It conjured a degree and an intensity of psychological reality far greater than any to be found elsewhere at the time in world cinema, by opening up characters’ sex lives, hidden desires, and deep emotional wounds, nothing less than the acknowledgement of the dignity of the individual over the limits of the social category.

### **2.1.3 Narrative aspect of the Movie**

Narrative is an aspect which associated with the storyline of the movie but it is different to the term –story”. Explained by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson in their book titled *Film Art: An Introduction* , narrative is an aspect of

a text which made from chains of events in a cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space. In the constructing the narrative aspect, plot and story are needed in order to find the explanation over the things that are not explicitly shown. The story itself is the set of all events in narrative while plot is a term describe everythings that visibly and audibly served. (Bordwell and Thompson, 75).

The narrative aspect, the plot and the story (including the dialogue), will be analyzed and also be compared to the biographical books of the figure. The results of the comparison then provides data that shapes the interpretation of the director, her subjectivity in constructing and conveying the character of Jane through the character representation.

#### **2.1.4 Non-Narrative aspect of the movie**

The non-narrative which also called as *mise en scene* is an aspect of the movie that covers other things beside the narrative. While the content of the movie structured by the narrative aspect, the non-narrative aspect has function to support and shape the idea that provided by the narrative aspect (Abrams, 93). The importance of analysing this aspect is to help the writer decide the portrayal of Jane toward the elements that this aspect had. Actually there are several elements in the *non-narrative aspect* but the writer decides to only focus on the conducting this study.

### 2.1.5 Camera Shots and Lighting

To the film director, lighting is more than illumination that enables the viewer to see the action. Lighting, like the other aspects of mise en-scene, is a tool used by the director to convey special meaning about a character or the narrative to the viewer. Lighting can help defining the setting of a scene or accentuate the behavior of the figures in the film. The quality of lighting in a scene can be achieved by manipulating the quality and the direction of the light. If a director wishes to conceal the identity of a particular character in a scene, he backlights the figure to allow the viewer to see only the outline of the character's body like the picture below.



Figure 9 (01:12:10)

The director wants the viewer to focus on the main character, Jane, rather than her husband, Leonard. These scenes depict Jane's activities in the apartment with her husband. It shows that this movie uses the main character that tells us the stories about women and its problem with her spouse.

The camera angle is also one of the important aspects in mise-en-scene. The shots are defined by the amount of subject matter that is included within the frame of the screen. The shot is necessarily defined by the distance between the camera and the object photographed, for in some instances certain lenses distort distances (Giannetti, 11).

## **2.2 Setting**

The world which will be created for certain characters in a film is as important as the selection of the actor or actress for that character. The vision of that \_world\_ has to be fixed from the beginning by the director, and it has to be explained clearly to the producer and all the crew so that they can have the same perception with the director. By seeing \_how\_ and \_where\_ a character lives, we starts to recognize who that character is before being introduced formally. Thus, the choosing of the perfect location is very important. A director has to consider these two: aesthetic which is based on script flow and director's perception: and practical which is based to cash availability and the schedule of the shooting.

## **2.3. Character Appearance**

Character performance focuses on the acting of the actor or actress of the film. This includes how the actor or actress movements and facial expression in the film. Abrams said that what an actor does within a shot obviously contributes

significantly to the meanings produced. The way in which an actor moves could indicate confidence, uncertainty, panic, or friendliness. The actor's facial expressions may show fear, anger, happiness, sadness. In addition to these examples of body language or non-verbal communication, and to the clear differences in the speech patterns of different actors, a performance may have a particular effect because of what the actor has previously done in other films (94).

### **2.3.1 Costume and Make-Up**

Costume and make up supports the characterization of each character in the film. It is also differentiate one character to the others. Costume and make-up also helps to point out some important messages such as time setting and cultural setting. Abrams said that costume helps creating an actor's character. They can place an actor within a particular historical period, indicate social class or lifestyle, and even determine what it is possible and what it does not (94).

### **2.3.2 Props**

Props are the inanimate objects placed within the setting. They may remain static or may be used by the characters in the film. Props may simply serve to strengthen the effect of the setting by making the environment in which the action takes visually more convincing (Abrams, 94). Furthermore, props work to give an authentic sense of place, but can also be used in more complex ways to

suggest important characteristics of particular individuals or even key themes for the whole film (Benyahia, 23).

## 2.4 Review of Related Studies

There are some related studies that the researcher found quite relevant with the domains of spirituality, feminism, and activism which enables to analyze the movie. In the first article written by Deborah Prokipchuk Ackley, "*Born from Silence*" : *Theory and Strategy for Resistance and Justice making Arising from the Birth of Creative Power*, the writer takes a look at the exploration of woman activism through a feminist, post-structuralist lens of the "story behind the story" of writing a book of poetry and art as this issue is also related to writing as a part of activism that women are becoming increasingly clear and vocal about the need to integrate an emerging set of feminine-based values into the culture".

Furthermore, she wrote that fourth wave of feminism advocates for both a gathering of the women in service of global issues, cultivating a spiritual depth within (Utne Reader, March-April, 2005) and to realize its dream, women need a "truly feminist, truly human theory of peace-making, of justice making, that is based on a profound understanding of creative power." (Leddy, in Ackley, *Redeeming Power*, 9).

Second, the writer also found that this statement will lead to further reference that explains the concept of spiritual philosophy and its process, conducted by Carol P. Christ in his article *Ecofeminism and Process Philosophy* that explained

the ways in which process philosophy offers dynamic alternatives to dualistic habits of thought. As the writer feels that it widely represents the main character that philosophy integrates with a set of values, women have come to learn after many years of trying to do just that in the world of work which requires a dying and letting be and the emergence of something new through birthing. It also requires the death of a world view as well as personal view. It does not start with political action from this deeper place. It is a life process, it is biological, spiritual, feminist, and cultural and if deep enough, it is cosmic or integral and it does result in redemption of power itself.

Third, it is an article conducted by Michael J. Sheridan entitled *Spiritual Activism: Grounding Ourselves in the Spirit* that explains. It is about the importance of approach to social change that is not rooted in political or economic biology, but grounded in spirituality. The writer also found the expert, which is Carla Goldstein, who has written a series of essays on spiritual activism, proposes that social justice efforts must be “born out of awareness, compassion and love, not out of reaction, fear and anger” (Goldstein, cited in Sheridan, para.1). It also highlights how diverse spiritual traditions provide a standard for social justice offer ways to manifest justice in the world. From such traditions, it can serve as “an independent moral framework” that allow us to step outside of “what is” and lean into “what should be”. So far, there have not been any previous studies on Kat Coiro’s *And While We Were Here*. Thus, this study can be a reference for the writer to examine the concept of woman activism and its spiritual philosophy brought by Kat Coiro in her movie. The similarities and the

differences among those three related studies are located on how women attempt to work harder to establish their rights for their independence especially for women activism.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHOD OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

Considering the object of this study is a movie which has its own meaning, the object of this study then can be categorized as text. Cited in Rachma Ida's book *Metode Penelitian: kajian Media dan Budaya*, the definition of text defined by McKee are everythings that could produce meaning (Ida, 40). The aim and the question that this study had are also around the social and human problem thus, the appropriate approach in conducting the analysis towards the object will be qualitative approach. In analyzing the movie, the writer will apply two steps of method used in this study. The first one is method of data collection and the second is data analysis.

However, the writer will focus only on the scenes showing the portrayal of main character, Jane, which cover up the issues of women spiritual activism through her journey and writing activities. Those scenes are wished to provide enough data about women spiritual activism. The main source of data in this research comes from the film itself. The writer will firstly watch the film intensely and pay no more attention in the specific scenes. In this process, the writer will note important information from the narrative aspects such as the dialogue, the plot, the characters, etc. Data is analyzed by choosing and focusing on several

scenes in the movie which involve the portrayal of woman activism that has been taken.

### **3.2 Data Sources**

This study uses qualitative method and is conducted by deeply analyzing the object of the study, which is movie released in 2013 made by Kat Coiro entitled "*And While We Were Here*". The object of the study is considered also as the primary source of this study which raised a story of a woman that has spiritual connection with her grandmother. It is an interesting phenomena to be observed as in interpreting the history of that figure, the director as a white male, must has his own subjectivity and interest to make this movie.

Beside the primary data, the writer also uses other data as the secondary data. The secondary data came from the biographical books of the figure, director's interview and various academic resources in written form or from internet such as e-books, scientific journals and articles discussion related to the issue of the study.

### **3.3 Scope and Limitation**

To keep the analysis on the expected track, the writer limits the analysis on the portrayal of Jane's character in Kat Coiro movie entitled "*And While We Were Here*". The analysis will be done by analyzing the narrative and non-narrative aspects related to the issue raised. The analysis will be done by analyzing the narrative and non-narrative aspects related to the issue raised. Those aspects will be gained from the selected shots from several scenes which considered by the writer to be the scenes that could represent how the director interprets her experience toward main character, Jane, in association with her grandma's figure the story of her life and the story of Jane itself.

### **3.4 Technique of Data Collection**

Considering that the object chosen for this study is a film, there are several steps required for the data collection, i.e. sorting and capturing certain scenes of the film which depict the issue of spiritualism, transcribing the dialogues contained therein which pertain women rights movements issue in writing, and classifying each components of those scenes narrative and non-narrative aspects.

### 3.5 Technique of Data Analysis

Film or motion picture has distinctive characteristics which make it different from the other audio visual documentaries. It is its specific elements of ‘\_narrative’ and ‘\_picture’ itself (Ida, 2011). The ‘\_narrative’ is the film narrative or the whole story of the film, while the picture is anything on screen excluded from the story of the non-narrative aspects of a film. Those two elements can be used to reveal what is being intended by a film. In this regard, data analysis used in this study encompasses both the narrative and non-narrative aspects.

The method of data analysis follows spiritualism theory in analyzing text. According to Alter in her article *The Spiritualist Movement and Its Advancement of The Nineteenth Century Women’s Movement* (2001), here is some questions to be asked when we analyze text using spiritualism theory, they are:

1. The data, which are the selected shots, will be deeply analyzed from its narrative and non narrative aspects in order to elaborate how the figure of Jane constructed in the movie. The writer sets 5 criteria in order to decide whether the portrayal is negative or positive. Those criteria are:
  - a) What is spiritualism?
  - b) What its relation with doing activism?
  - c) What are the characters issues?
  - d) How spiritualism and activism taking place meaning for women?

e) What social forces or moral forces that can be achieved from doing that?

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS**

In this chapter the results of the data analysis are presented. The data were collected and then processed in response to the problems posed in chapter 1 of this thesis. Two fundamental goals drove the collection of the data and the subsequent data analysis. Those goals were to develop a base of knowledge about spiritualism and woman activism construction, as it is perceived and utilized relative to women issue represented in the movie and to determine if current perception and utilization are consistent with the basic goals or principles of technology education. These objectives were accomplished. The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate the potential for merging theory of activism in spiritualism and .

#### **4.1 Activism, Spiritual Motivation and The Body**

First, before talking about spiritual activism, it is very important to know the definition of activism itself. Activism is not only about the act of involving self in local instigations of new series of elements intersecting the actual, generating new collective enunciation, experimentation and investigations, which erode good and common sense and cause of action but also about consciousness and increasing consciousness then transform it in a way which is better. From these descriptions, activism can encompass a wide diversity of actions to increase or change women consciousness. It often conjures images of front line protests,

letter writing, awareness campaigns, civil disobedience, and rallies. This kind of activism is challenging, as it demands every women to struggle, feel and act upon that feeling. Besides that, it also invites women to work for change, to know who they are, to see themselves in all their embeddedness as it requires women to vision themselves free, put themselves on the line and to take action for a better world. Therefore, women spiritual activism calls women to be introspective and value the consciousness of their being in their whole life.

Spiritualism proposes the concept of power equity to control over the soul as the sources of empowerment to fight for women's equality. Both spiritualism and feminist movements such as women writing have the same goal as they want to free women from oppressive gender roles because it also mediates equal rights for education and voting, reproductive rights, abortion rights, protection against sexual harassment and domestic violence, equal opportunities to control over their soul, both in this world and in the next.

According to the writer, there are some scenes in the movie that portray a particular form of women's spiritual activism with writing as a form of activism. In order to be coherent with the issue that brought in the movie, the writer uses theory activism proposed by Svirsky (2010) stating that activism produces change engendering "evolution and recreation within the system". The writer also use the theory offered by Tatiana Kontou (2009) in relation with spiritualism and women writing. These two subjects uses the notion of medium ship in two distinct ways for the analysis whether it works-historically (in terms of context, documentation, research and so on) or metaphorically (in terms of a wider, textual/critical

framework) where one of the most interesting aspect of mediumship that works in subversive quality was legitimized in a spiritualist context (Kontou, p.8). Thus, the relevance of spiritualism as the ideology can be manifested in a way that everyone has some degree of ability to channel the dead i.e. be a medium.

In this case, it is clear that Jane's grandma voice role as a medium for Jane in implementing the spirit of activism in her era as she aimed to show her grandchildren to understand deeper the story of her life. Then, Jane also heard the tape recorder that contained her grandma's history, and then she gradually transcribed it in a piece of paper.

From that activity, mediumship in a spiritualist context portrayed in a way that Jane's grandma act as a medium of *unseen voice* who gave upon her historical experiment to her grandchildren about what happened in her last time, her relationships with her boyfriend and what cause her whole story was so impressive binge told. Then, this kind of writing activity also gives the impact to Jane, as the main character that later have rights to decide and determine what she desires to do. Transcribing historical record of her grandma can be an interesting activity for developing her skills as an independent woman travel writer. It also enables her to express herself in a free way, making diary with describing things whether she is in a happy or the gloomy mood in a written form.



#### 4.1.1 Jane as the Portrayal of Woman Defining Activism and Spiritual Philosophy

In this movie, a woman, especially the main character, Jane, is described as the person who independently tries to search her own life meaning through her journey in Italy. From the first scene, it clearly represents that Jane comes to Italy with her husband, Leonard which is a violin player that will be heading to his concert in Naples.

*Leonard: I'm looking for the concert hall I think we may drive by it.*

*Jane: There it is!*

*Leonard: Very funny.*

*Jane: I think it's gonna be good us being here (00:03:28).*

This scene wants to emphasize the reader with the essence of film as the beginning of Jane's journey. From Jane's statement, "I think it's gonna be good us being here." It seemed that she fully wishes to enjoy her special trip in Italy with his husband conveniently and hopes everything will be okay when they are there.



*Jane: Shit.*

*Leonard: What?*

*Jane: I can't find my wallet.*

*Leonard: Put in your suitcase?*

*Jane: No. It's not my suitcase. Why would I put it in my suitcase?*

*Leonard: Well, it's got to be somewhere. Maybe it's in the car.*

*Jane: Thank you.*

*Taxi driver: (speaking Italian)*

*Leonard: She's lost her purse. Her purse.*

*(speaking Italian)*

*Leonard: Will you just give her a minute?*

*Taxi driver: All right. Okay, okay, okay.*

*Leonard: When did you have it last?*

*Jane: The train station, I think. The exchange booth.*

*Leonard: Shit. Oh, Janey, I'm sorry. That bastard at the train station stole it. When you dropped all your stuff (00:04:41).*

In this scene, something inconvenient happens, their enjoyable trip seems immediately be ruined by the fact that Jane lost her purse when she wants to pay the bill for taxi. She seeks her purse anywhere and does not find it yet and then her husband asks her where exactly she put her purse. Leonard finally understands that his wife lost his purse in the train station in the exchange booth where they found a man passed them by when Jane dropped all her stuff there. Symbolically, losing purse indicates that though woman has a husband, it does not give the

guarantee that her husband could help her from the danger even satisfying her soul.

*Leonard: You love how they ask? As if I have a choice.*

*Jane: Do you know what I'm gonna try to do while I'm here?*

*Leonard: Besides learn Italian?*

*Jane: I don't know why you think that's so ridiculous.*

*Leonard: I don't at all. I admire you. I just think it's too late for me.*

*Jane: That's not true.*

*Leonard: The whole bloody world speaks English.*

*Jane: Well, I'm going to finally transcribe the tapes. (00:06:58)*

This movie also associated with people that lived between two world wars against restriction and disillusionment. What matters in this movie is not only about Jane's loveless marriage with Leonard. Instead, it also implicitly picturesque some sort of commemorations about her grandma's experience in taking role as a subject and unseen narrator of woman activism lived between two world wars. We see that the actual personal element in this film came from the tapes, the set of tapes. Then, she begins to write her thought just as she wants to do. From the very beginning, Leonard treats Jane delicately and there is no sense of tragedy about to happen between the couple. By day, Leonard works and Jane explores the city listening to tapes of the interview with her grandmother talking about her past experiences during two world wars.

The relationship of this spouse looks becoming more awkward since what matters to Jane's wishes does not bother Leonard so much as he seems nerd and lack of sensitivity. Physically, their relationship as a husband and wife seems normal but actually, their soul is remaining aloof and distance. Later day, before going to work, Leonard asks what she wanted to do here besides learning Italian.

It also clearly shows that miscommunication happens among this spouse. Jane asks her husband for his support and suggestions to her of what she has supposed to do during their vacation while Leonard seemingly out of reach and keep talking out of context. The spiritual philosophy approach that can be seen here is that Jane eventually focuses herself on her mind-journey listening to the tape that she has recorded for a few years that tells her grandma's pastime. Jane, at the same time, realizes that she entrapped in her relationship with her husband because of former accident that was her pregnancy leads her to an early marriage. Then, she also feels deeply sad for her inability to produce the children for many times with her husband though he claimed he still loves her. As she felt bored, she took an impromptu trip to Ischia, enjoying herself with the recorded tape of her grandma's stories during two world wars instead of staying alone and bored in the apartment waiting for her husband for a long time. At first, she asked her husband to allow her enjoy walking outside. She buys a ticket to go there to catch the ferry.

As stated by Christ (2003) that process philosophy offers a convincing account of creative freedom and its limitations in a thoroughly social world. It asserts that feeling like sympathy, relationship, creativity, freedom, and enjoyment are the fundamental threads that unite all beings in the universe, and it has a body,

which is the whole world. In contrast, the spiritual way is to see beyond mere outer appearances and the five senses to an intuitive perception of the causes behind outer conditions. Someone with a spiritual approach may change and uplift their world by first transforming and improving his or her own vision.

Spiritualism proposes the concept of power equity to control over type soul as the sources of empowerment to fight for women's equality. This theory seems to be the proper theory for this study. Generally, spiritualism has close relationship with feminist movements and both have the same goal; they want to free woman from the oppressive gender roles (Alter, 173). Spiritualism determines how women view themselves and each other, what traits they value, how they define "success", how they assume they learn, and how they view change. It also does represent women desire to engage with non-tangible dimension of what they experience as "greater than themselves" that encompasses a significant portion of our worldview (Riddle, 3).

Indirectly, Jane's grandma has played suitable role as the archetype of Goddess for her. It is due to her absence character, the writer see that Jane is finally inspired and more feeling alive. Despite the fact that she is not the main character and absence in the reality, she still has a role to conduct the aspect of "divinities" where spiritualism has operated in something more than forms of behavior, even something more than images in the psyche (Hilman, 1995).

#### **4.1.2 Jane's Loveless Marriage and the Process Re-identification of Herself**

The conflict that found in this movie is that Jane has a loveless marriage. It is that she has had a forbidden love affair with her husband, Leonard, before they were married. Since that time, Jane must be committed her own life into a sacred marriage as it was morally wrong for her family tradition which is so religious to see if they had their daughter got pregnant before committed to marriage.

When someday Jane has to follow her husband in journey to Italy, she felt that she also has a chance to repair her inner uncertainty for her loveless marriage. There is an innate sense of intimacy that revokes her into time and space related to her deceased grandmother's journey between two world wars. As Jane's grandma has so many fruitful stories that terribly allures Jane to neglect her surroundings.

Speaking of concrete images of death as crumbling matrimony metaphor, the writer found that Coiro uses her own symbol in the memory of a miscarried child Jane used as a weapon against Leonard when their unhappiness reaches a fever pitch. Because Leonard is so thinly drawn, his presence is only meant to add "nuance" to Jane's character, so her dispirited situation becomes dramatically gratifying, and only exposes Jane's stuck-up personality more.

Jane is so detached from reality to the point where she appears to live in a romance novel, her standards are so high that her irritation toward her husband stems from the fact that he cannot reach her level and in the end, Caleb naturally suffers the same fate as well. More egregious is how Coiro orchestrates the film's

universe to actively work in Jane's favor, with no rewarding conflict arising because the world throws only incidents that benefit her emotional state. Jane was bound to meet someone like Caleb when she is so dispassionate about her husband, and of course this younger man recites Italian poetry and appropriate viola jokes when he looks more likely to rattle off Dave Matthews Band lyrics. It's only Claire Bloom's unseen grandmother who has the right idea to get out, ending the film with a statement —"Now shut that thing off!" toward Jane's tape recorder. Bloom, like most of audiences, would most likely rather stroll through an ancient city with Ingrid Bergman at the audience side.

#### **4.1.3 Spiritual Activities Gained by Jane**

Jane had actually nothing to do with her life as she eventually becomes perplexed by the reality that her purpose in life is actually indefinable even by her husband, Leonard and by stranger young man, Caleb.

The writer eventually found that the ending of the film is still uncertain. Jane, is forever changed by her trauma nothing as big as a war, but difficult all the same doubts her ability to write something original and important. Meanwhile, Leonard is frustrated by her, perhaps feeling that she is failing herself.

*And While We Were Here* strives in vain to form a kinship with *Voyage to Italy*, but its insipid film ends up looking more like a version of Roberto Rossellini's masterpiece reworked as a photo diary posted on facebook. In this

case, Coiro means to evoke irony with her depiction of a marriage falling apart amid the romantic locales of Italy, yet her overindulgence in photographing the gorgeous vistas and old-world charm of the country only expose more how glaringly undeveloped and derivative her idly-shaped characters and film are.

The writer really enjoyed how Coiro, the director examines the relationship between Leonard and Jane by simply not showing it. There are several scenes of the two in the same room, but not speaking. It is unclear whether they have discussed anything at all, and as the writer mind races with thoughts of what happened between them, you get the sense that their minds are racing as well. I understand that Jane is troubled, but the writer found Kate Bosworth to be too cold in the role and even when her character is happy, it is hard to experience it with her. Iddo Goldberg on the other hand is extremely tragic and frail as he tries to give his wife the distance he thinks she needs. He never wants to upset her, and by pulling back too far, he is unknowingly ruining their relationship.

#### **4.2 The Ideology Constructed in *And While We Were Here***

*And While We Were Here* takes place in modern day, though its location, classical music score and fashion sense (it feels as if Leonard was conceived wearing a skinny black tie) scream a previous era. The intention is to mimic Italian Neo-Realism, though *“While We Were Here”* stays concrete when it needs magic, it zigs where it should zag.



From the title *And While We Were Here*, we can just freely interpret that this movie indicates the main character, as a woman who is caught between two worlds. Two worlds that made her so confused which is in time she and her husband lived and the world when the stories of her deceased grandmother become more.

The director, Coiro had actually made a set of tapes of her own grandmother as the adaptation for this movie, and for years she kind of had them, such as Jane's character starred by Kate Bosworth, on a shelf and they would stress her out because they were not quite enough to make a biography of Coiro's such as Jane's character starred by Kate Bosworth, on a shelf and they would stress her out because they were not quite enough to make a biography of Coiro's grandmother but they were really compelling. Thus, the tape represented in this movie related to Kat Coiro's very personal connecting with her grandma. However, the writer assumes 'here' that the title *And While We Were Here* offered is implicitly refers to our time here on earth, not the time Jane and Leonard spend in Italy.

### 4.3 Interpretation of Finding

*And While We Were Here* movie wants to represent the reality that women cannot be fully freed until their burden is relieved as well. As depicted in the movie, the main character, Jane seems to be not enthusiastic with her personal relationship with her husband and remains aloof. Then, the writer slowly learns that they may have lost a child not long ago. Her husband, Leonard represented as a dull, busy businessperson that his presence seems to be off somewhere else so that Jane has difficulty to identify his personal motives and problems with her. As a struggling writer from the United States, she wants to make a breakthrough how to escape from this disillusionment while she is in Italy with her husband.

From the beginning of the scene to the middle of the scene that Jane, as a representation of woman came from America depicted as a frantic wife. It can be inferred from her personal relationship with her husband where the writer saw that two spouses were reading books by themselves that they actually lack of communication and keep distance. Then, the writer also finds that their sexual relationship is frigid, so that it represents there is no mutual interaction between she and her husband where the audience may also conclude that they are no longer on a healthy relationship.

The writer slowly understands that this movie associated with the portrayal of the U.S. immigrants from their social status as two spouses treated improperly by their surroundings, their working environments may be terribly depressing caused them to decide to take a journey in a new place where they can fulfill the

challenge to live a life as they wish. Again, the writer also notices that they are a victim of American dreams because both of them seem like entrapped in the world that full of catastrophe where everything seems hopeless including their future.

The writer finally found the meaning of spiritual activism for women and its moral forces in the context of American dreams. It is to relieve women burden from world distractions that entangles them to develop their inner self and to empowers women that they still have a chance to do more and more valuable activities to invigorate their mind instead of entrapped in domestic unit and let themselves prone to the discontentment of traditional gender roles held in society. *And While We Were Here* movie has its familiarity with people's nation, bounds, lineages, wars, social economic and themes that associated with romanticism. In this context, the director, Kat Coiro wants to emerge her life in past time with her grandma through this cinematic medium.

Therefore, Jane, as the main character that Coiro puts in this movie is the portraying of her stories and in fact, this movie totally reflecting her interpretation about her past life with her grandma. Besides that, the writer found that similarly, this movie reflects to the reason that there was not even more American neo realist in Hollywood is that another form of realism method acting was coming to the studios. It conjured a degree and an intensity of psychological reality far greater than any to be found elsewhere at the time in world cinema, by opening up characters sex lives, hidden desires, and deep emotional wounds, nothing less than

the acknowledgement of the dignity of the individual over the limits of the social category.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that *And While We Were Here* contains women rights movement as the core issue of the studies. Spiritualism did not always play with human consciousness with the spirit world even to accept any religious knowledge from the spirit since people, by themselves, believed that it did not oppress any gender role, as its ideology did not neglect human rights, i.e. women's rights. What perceived to be important is that spiritualism appreciates human soul, and had a perfect right to control over their soul, both in this world and in the next, while, practicing activism theory is about increasing consciousness to interrupt the unshakeable practices and structure of injustice and unpleasant treatment in a fracture world.

Kate Bosworth gives the best performance of her career as Jane, a depressed tourist trapped in a loveless marriage who spontaneously enters into an affair with a younger man she meets while wandering Ischia. In every scene, Bosworth commands the viewer's attention with work more emotive and utterly mesmerizing than anything viewer has previously seen from her. Though *And While We Were Here* is too constrained (it clocks in at just 83 minutes) to let Bosworth develop her character as fully as I would have liked, she takes what she's given and does with it a startling amount. Her finest moment comes during the film's sneeringly intense final act, when Jane confronts her emotionally distant violist husband Leonard (Iddo Goldberg) about the fatal flaws in their

relationship. Bosworth's complex portrayal of a woman lost in her own life is a truly staggering accomplishment.

As the love triangle between her characters develops and quietly, slowly builds to a tense final act, Coiro cleverly alternates between examining them from afar, like a photographer capturing wildlife, and bringing the camera in uncomfortably close, as if putting them under a magnifying glass. Coiro's equally fascinating treatment of Ischia as a paradise just out of her characters' grasps gives the film the feel of an introspective, acutely personal travelogue. Matteo Messina's terrific orchestral score aids her in this endeavour, conjuring up vivid images of Italy's cobblestone streets all by itself.

This romantic drama written and directed by Kat Coiro effectively conveys some of the ways in which married couples can meander about and wind up never being on the same page. Jane uses her intimate relationship with Caleb to re-awaken her dormant sexual passion. The young American asks her to accompany him on a trip to Tibet, but after a heated truth-telling talk with her, Leonard he is confident that they can save their marriage by returning home together. Jane's choice between the two options arises out of the many emotions and experiences she has in Italy and when they all coalesce, the decision she makes rings true.

Goldberg is also superb as Leonard, a complex but quiet man who always prefers the company of his instrument to Jane. Though he does love his wife, Leonard does so from a distance, pushing her aside in favour of work without

realizing how close he is to losing her. Only a murmured “I love you” and the occasional lovemaking, bereft of all affection, makes it past the wall those months of stony silence between the two has erected. Goldberg communicates Leonard’s unwitting cruelty and conflicted heart with a wonderfully nuanced performance, and because of that, the film is able to capture the pain and suffering of an imploding marriage from both sides.

Leonard is a handsome and accomplished viola player who has come to Naples for a high profile concert engagement. His somewhat younger wife Jane is beautiful, but that is about it. Some unspoken tragedy weighs heavily on their marriage, but on their first night in Naples they try to get in the romantic Italian spirit. Unfortunately, the next morning, Leonard the wet blanket insists on going to the rehearsals he has committed to attend, leaving Jane at loose ends.

When Leonard’s neglect grows unbearable, Jane, wanting more than perfunctory romance and fearing that her future has been decided for her, breaks away by impulsively beginning an affair with 19-year-old Caleb, played by relative unknown Jamie Blackley. Bursting with vivacity and excitement, the British actor is perfect for the role, displaying a blend of charisma and nervous energy that is both true to the kind of character he is playing and wildly enjoyable to watch. Though his chemistry with Bosworth is not immediate, watching the two of them interact and build a rapport throughout the film is both liberating and profoundly touching.

While Jane is experiencing a war within her marriage, she is able to listen to the actual war that her grandmother experienced and feel their feelings. So it was likely a device that the director, Kat Coiro, used to broaden the scope of the story so it wasn't just this little tiny story of three people, a little tiny love triangle. It was also a personal kind of dedication to her grandmother, to use her story. Coiro, like the idea that when the viewers usually hear about World War II, they are right in the thick of it, in high drama, in the tragic nature of war where just horrible things happen. And her grandmother lived through that war, but on the periphery. It was never a story that she had really seen before, and she wanted to tell it in some way. It is kind of a roundabout way, but she likes the way that it threads its way in there.

There is a brief scene laid in front of a wall covered in graffiti that reads (in Italian), "The future is not written." This is in essence the theme of the film. For Jane, there is a dichotomy between past and future. She has her grandmother's memories on tape. That is set. It is written. She can see what her future with Leonard would be like. She begins to consider what a future would look like with Caleb as well. This part of fork in the road has considerably philosophical. She senses that this is the moment that her future will begin to be written.



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## SYNOPSIS

### AND WHILE WE WERE HERE

And While We Were Here is about a weary couple who, while on a brief trip in Italy, are forced to confront their failing relationship when the wife has an affair with a younger man. Kate Bosworth stars as a woman named “Jane” who is pale, sad, and very, very thin. Jane is married to a classical musician named “Leonard” (Iddo Goldberg). Leonard makes his living playing the viola, a profession that requires tremendous talent as well as commitment and self-discipline. Leonard is also very handsome and speaks with a high class English accent.

In the opening scenes of *And While We Were Here*, Jane and Leonard are on a train bound for Naples where he has invited to perform. Leonard is clearly someone who is extremely good at what he does, but what does Jane do? Why is she free to travel with him? Doesn't she have a job? Slowly, it is known that Leonard has brought Jane along because she recently suffered a miscarriage, and he does not want her to be alone. So why is Jane so sad?

Jane haunted by her inability to have children. She is stuck in a hapless marriage unable to move the relationship forward. Jane and her husband Leonard's exchanges are short and harsh.

Leonard, played by Iddo Goldberg, never has time to engage with her. His time is overwhelmed with his career as a violist and when he is present he is

condescending and dismissive. It is difficult to tell at first whether or not his demanding work or his wife's constantly dragging mood instigates his behavior.

Kate Bosworth's stiff demeanor works well in this subtle role. Even though the script is weak, her portrayal of desperation is quite powerful. Her intense stares and fragile stature create a sympathetic character especially in contrast to her brutish husband.

Jane does not speak much and when she does she is meek and passive. However, as the film progresses it becomes clear that Leonard's abrasive self-centeredness is smothering her.

While journeying around Italy, Jane bumps into a young man named Caleb. While he is supposed to be carefree and charming, his hovering seems driven out of boredom and is more annoying than endearing. Jamie Blackley is sweet enough but his character has little depth, only a naïve, puppy-love kindness that involves zero forward thinking or rational.

It is understandable that Jane is seduced by Caleb's attention. He is young, handsome and engaging. He asks many questions and tells many stories. Caleb excites Jane and when she exudes this happiness toward her husband, he shuts down her joy instantly. He is older and disheartened by what he perceives is immaturity. All Jane wants him to do is show some sort of emotion and he cannot deliver.

Jane and Caleb's affair is depicted through a series of mini-adventures throughout Italy, which have a teen-romance air about them. It's an odd couple

but it is fun to see them enjoying the sun and their romantic surroundings however briefly. Jane isn't head over heels for this young kid, she is just starved for attention and needs to feel wanted.

Blackley's best moment of the film is when he describes the trip Jane is supposed to take with him with tears running down his face. This subtle begging and sadness was the strongest point in the film.

A subplot of the movie involves Jane's novel in progress. She listens to her grandmother's stories on tape about war, love, and life. This part of the film wasn't too engaging and felt out of place. It serves as the soundtrack and inspires Jane's final action of going out on her own and discovering herself without a partner.

Jane may not have a job per se, but she does have a project. She has hours and hours of tapes she made of her Grandmother, "Grandma Eves" (Claire Bloom), who has since passed away. Jane says she wants to turn her tapes into a book, and she has brought the tapes with her so she can "transcribe them" while they are in Naples. Leonard tries to sound encouraging, but his words carry a hint of scepticism. Jane is immediately offended and on the defensive. Clearly this marriage is in big trouble. Leonard, looking sharp and totally adult, picks up his viola case and heads for the door, stopping long enough to tell Jane that he's left extra cash for her in case she needs it, and asking only that she keep him informed if she decides to leave their pied-à-terre (small apartment kept for occasional use).

Jane, wearing tiny short shorts and a baby doll top, packs her “Grandma Eves Project” paraphernalia into a tote that is almost as big as she is and heads off. One cappuccino later, Jane is ready for an adventure, so she boards a ferry bound for Ischia, and off she goes.

Does Jane find “adventure”? However, unlike American women before her who went to Italy and found themselves swept away by suave Italians, Jane has her romance with an American, to be precise, Jane allows herself to be “seduced” by an American named “Caleb” (Jamie Blackley) who is celebrating his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday on the day they meet. “You’re from Maine? I’m from Massachusetts! Wow!”

Jane and Caleb have no chemistry and their rambles around Ischia (walking on the beach, dancing on the quay, diving off the cliff into sapphire blue water) are ludicrous—pure “Tourist Porn” of the most repulsive variety. Are we supposed to laugh at the waiter blubbering in exasperated Italian when they skip out on a restaurant bill? Talk about “Ugly Americans,” eek!

The saddest part is that Claire Bloom is really wonderful as Grandma Eves. Faithful is physically present in some of the early scenes, but the majority of her “screen time” consists of voice overs as the Austrian Empress sends increasingly insistent letters from Vienna to the French Queen—her daughter—in Paris.

As Grandma Eves reflects on her life—telling Jane story after story about how precious life was for the people living under bombardment during World War II—we get a sense of the film that might have been if only Coiro had kept better control of her story. *And While We Were Here* refers to our time here on earth, not the time Jane and Leonard spend in Italy.

Iddo Goldberg is also very good as Leonard, and his final scene is so strong that I really can see him inheriting Colin Firth's crown as Firth ages out of the Leading Man category.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Jane

Jane is the main character in *And While We Were Here* movie. A beautiful newlywed American woman, Jane is working on transcribing tapes she has made of her grandmother's memories of her life. She is a freelance writer working on a book about her grandmother's experiences in England during the two world wars. Throughout the film she listens back to her recorded conversations with grandma, which have an uncanny way of commenting upon her present circumstances. While Jane is experiencing a war within her marriage, she is able to listen to the actual war that her grandmother experienced and feel their feelings.



Jane while she has trip to Ischia



## **Appendix 2 Leonard**

Leonard (Iddo Goldberg), Jane's husband, an English classical viola player who is getting ready for an orchestra concert.



Leonard went to Naples to attend the viola concert

## **Appendix 3 Caleb**

Caleb (Jamie Blackley), a 19 year old vagabond American who wins Jane attention by reciting poetry in Italian and proving himself to be a playful soul with a repertoire of improvised jokes about viola musicians.



Caleb joined Jane and Leonard while they were having breakfast in cafe