

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

For this study, the writer applies the concepts of cultural studies as the main tool in analyzing the whole spectrum of high culture/popular culture phenomenon. As it is widely known among the students and people dealing with literature, there has been the so-called great literature and quite the opposite popular culture or –as in the terms given by F. R. Leavis in his book *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture-* minority culture versus mass civilization.

When it comes to deal with literature in terms of high culture/popular culture framework, the inevitable consequence would be to involve the discussion of cultural issues. Literature is, in essence, a reflection of human life within the framework of prose, poetry, and plays. Human life itself involves the whole aspects of socio-cultural nature. Literature originates from the deepest human desire to preserve certain points and values of life which deserve to be preserved in words. Again, these whole definitions give the truest meaning that literature in its existence is supported by cultural values. It has an aesthetic quality which connects fundamentally with the desire of man to express his appreciation of life into words. In the sense of cultural studies, however, literary study was founded –according to Antony Easthope in *Literary Into Cultural Studies-* on the opposition between literature and popular culture (p. 107).

A. High Culture

High Culture, or in this case high literature, always comes with the idea that it is good and in many ways better than popular culture (Easthope, p. 12). It is this prejudice that keeps the separation between high culture and popular culture seems to be taken for granted. It is desirable yet impossible that there should be a clear-cut definition regarding high culture and what makes it stand out over popular culture.

According to Q. D. Leavis in *Fiction and the Reading Public*, high literature or literary canon or whatever it may be called, presents some sort of stringencies which may help the reader to deal 'less inadequately' with 'actual life'. High culture is liberal, and based on personal psychology and moral individualism. By this definition alone, it can be inferred that any kind of literary work which is based on personal feelings and emotions and whose values transcend the distance of time can be labeled as high culture or literature.

Given the various criteria on which literary canon is defined certainly result in the absurdities of reason as to how a piece of work can be defined as a canon or not. As a result of this the writer will refer to the fact described by Q. D. Leavis that high culture or literary canon is not affected by the necessity to produce 'wish-fulfillment' as in popular culture and is usually endorsed by economic necessities. However the problems of distinguishing between what is categorically called high culture and what is not are complex and involve the whole idea of taste and value.

B. Popular Culture

The term popular culture in the western civilization of the twentieth century, as implied by Easthope, is associated commonly with the great contemporary media such as newspaper, radio, television, and film whose condition of existence was modern technology, especially in visual reproduction (p.76). From this premise, it can be inferred that a story told using the film medium has the preconceived tendency to become a popular work of arts. The writer therefore, intends to apply the similar preconception to the film *Sleepy Hollow* by placing it as a representative of the popular culture side.

It is imperative that the terminology of popular culture must be clarified first in terms of its relation with the society at large. By society, the writer tries to formulate the definition of popular culture as the mass civilization connected arts. Easthope argues that, although especially in North America the term 'mass culture' is widely used to describe popular culture (as in 'mass media'), it tends to ally itself to a conventional sociology and theories of popular culture according to functionalist notions of 'mass society' and social control, thus subscribing essentially to define 'popular' as to mean the mass media imposed on people by commercial interests (p. 76).

By taking the film *Sleepy Hollow* as a representation of popular culture, the writer has brought the idea of Hollywood as the industrial force behind the exposure of films as the main example of twentieth century's most significant form of storytelling popular culture. Hortense Powdermaker in her essay *Hollywood and the*

U. S. A. states that "in Hollywood the concept of a business civilization has been carried to an extreme. Property is far more important than man, and human values have to struggle hard to exist at all" (p. 282).

C. The Theories of the Split

There are three main accounts of the twentieth century split between high and popular culture according to Easthope which the writer also applies in the analysis of the segregation between high and popular culture.

The first conception, a liberal one, is based in personal psychology and moral individualism. Popular culture in all its forms provides 'wish-fulfillment' for its readers or audiences. High culture, usually in the form of novel, defines reality less inadequately with actual life (p. 78).

The second and third conceptions are Marxist based. The second, which is called the Frankfurt school, deals with the idea that "under corporate capitalism, as the worker becomes ever more alienated from production and propelled towards mere consumption in leisure time, so popular culture becomes ever more adapted to commodity production" (p. 78). This stance suggests that popular culture exists merely for the economic and commercial reason which discovers its target audience in the working class group.

The third conception, which Easthope calls Althusserian, has its focus of attention on the ruling class ideology. It pays great attention to the study of popular culture and that the concept of dominant ideology (usually held by the minority of ruling class) takes popular culture as specially marked by ideology whereas high

culture, relatively, is not (p. 79). To put in a clear-cut distinction, high culture is pure and popular culture is crammed with subtle indoctrination by the ruling class towards the mass society.

Popular culture does not limit itself only within the enclosure of literature but also to other art such as music, film, as well as television and other mass media which depend their lives on the taste of the mass civilization.

D. Film as Popular Culture

The term 'popular' when applied to film is more closely associated with the idea of cultural form which is enjoyed by a large number of people. From the very beginning, film and the film industry have been identical with the amount of money thrown in the making of it, and because of this, a film is forced to be able to reap all the money spent for its production cost. Albert Hunt in the essay *The Film* states that "in each case, the form of the film communication has been dictated by economic pressures. As film costs rise, it becomes increasingly necessary to aim for the widest possible audience" (p. 246).

From the above description, there is no doubt that a film is designed and crafted to fulfill the economic obligation of returning the cost of production as well as gaining profit through the ticket sales. This typical quality brings the conclusion and conviction to the writer that a film is indeed a work of popular culture underlined by the necessity to generate profit.

In its relation with cultural studies, Julia Rivkin and Michael Ryan state in the essay *The Politics of Culture* that film, along with television and other mass media can be seen from two perspectives. One is of economic, ethnic, and gender domination (p. 1026). They state that "owned by large corporations and largely run by men, the media and the entertainment industry in general cannot help but assist the reproduction of the social system by allowing only certain kinds of imagery and ideas to gain access to mass audiences. Generated by those at the top of the social hierarchy, the media inevitably further attitudes and perceptions that assure its continuation" (p. 1026). This idea of the control by the ruling class of the social hierarchy is exactly what Easthope labels as Althusserian concept (p. 78).

The second perspective, according to Rivkin and Ryan, views culture from the bottom up and focuses more on how cultural things express energies and attitudes fundamentally at odds with the attitudes and assumptions (the deferment of gratification in order better to be able to work, for example) of the capitalist social order. Culture comes from below, and while it can be harnessed in profitable and ultimately socially conservative ways, it also represents the permanent possibility of eruption, of dissonance, and of an alternative imagination of reality (p. 1026-1027). This way, film and other forms of popular culture can be regarded as the expression of the common people, voicing their own choice of art.

Essentially, film puts the entertaining aspect on top of its content. Therefore, it is likely that, to some extent, a film might be regarded as a mere crowd pleaser, existing solely to satisfy the dreams and please the often formulaic demands of the society at large. This idea of entertaining values should be differentiated from those

found in high culture, which manage to make a combination between the entertainment and the reality principles.

As stated by Arthur Knight in his book *Motion Pictures USA*, therefore, summing up the essence of film as the propagandistic advantage, it is –and always has been the public, the ultimate consumer, that remains the uppermost in the filmmakers' minds. The reason is obvious. No other art is quite so expensive; no other art form has ever been so dependent on pleasing vast numbers of people merely to enable artist to remain in business. In the truest sense, the motion picture is a popular art and when it fails to reach vast numbers of people, the fault may lie less in lack of appreciation on the part of the audience than in the filmmakers' ability to communicate in the common language of the medium (p. 4).

CHAPTER III

WASHINGTON IRVING'S ORIGINAL TALE AND THE FILM VERSION