

Chapter IV

Supernaturalism and Romanticism: An Analysis on High Culture versus Popular Culture

Throughout this chapter, the writer explores the domain of supernaturalism and romanticism from the points of view of high culture and popular culture in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and the film *Sleepy Hollow*. The earlier part will deal with the separate examination on each of the Irving's tale and the film. In the latter part of the chapter, there will be a discussion on the signifying distinctions between the original tale and the film based on Antony Easthope's three measures of high culture/popular culture dichotomy.

A. Washington's Irving *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*

A. 1. On Supernaturalism

At first glimpse, Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is very much like a truly frightening horror story about a headless horseman haunting a small village, as can be inferred from this excerpt taken from the original story:

The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region and seems to be commander-in-chief of all the powers of the air is the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head has been carried

away by a cannon ball, in some nameless battle during the Revolutionary War, and who is ever and anon seen by the country folk, hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wings of the wind. (p. 4)

A closer look will prove otherwise; that Irving intends his story to be a humorous character study, holding up schoolteacher Ichabod Crane as an example of ludicrous superstition, rather than a true horror tale. The ghost which pursues Ichabod through the woods is unmasked, though subtly, as the ungainly scholar's romantic rival Brom Van Brunt, intent on scaring him away from pretty heiress Katrina Van Tassel. Establishing the American preference for a lusty bully-type macho man above the too-thoughtful nerd, Brom gets the girl and Ichabod is persecuted into, supposedly, fleeing the town. "As he was a bachelor and in nobody's debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him," concludes Irving in the end of his story (p. 66). From the story's beginning up until the end, the tone of the story –despite its sarcastic gloominess– is highly lighthearted, punctuated here and there by some ridiculing thoughts of the storyteller; the characters are designed by Irving in a caricaturing way as to convey his preference to view things through his sarcastic and witty observation.

The story comes to reader as a paper from Diedrich Knickerbocker (actually Irving's alter ego in many of his stories), who has been a favorite with Irving's audiences for a long time, who in his turn had heard the story from 'a pleasant, shabby, gentlemanly old fellow at a Corporation meeting of the ancient city of Manhattoes'. Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* starts off with the

suggestive description that the small Dutch town of Sleepy Hollow is indeed filled with supernatural atmosphere, just as Irving writes:

A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land and to pervade the very atmosphere. Some say that the place was bewitched by a high German doctor during the early days of the settlement; others, that an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe, held his powwows there before the country was discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson. Certain it is, the place still continues under the sway of some witching power that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual reverie. They are given to all kinds of marvelous beliefs, are subject to trances and visions, and frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighborhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions; stars shoot and meteors glare oftener across the valley than in any other part of the country, and the nightmare, with her whole ninefold, seems to make it the favorite scene of her gambols. (p. 3-4)

Being the main element which advertises *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* as a vague supernatural tale, the iconic Headless Horseman becomes the story's most attractive character to many readers who expect to find the occasional horror and suspense from this kind of tale. The Headless Horseman is the first truly American addition to the gallery of horror figures which evolved, in the twentieth century, into the monster-movie pantheon, mostly dominated by British characters such as Count

Dracula, the Frankenstein's monster and Mr. Hyde in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; and like such comparable British characters, the Horseman is principally a foreigner, an invader of sacred soil. Like that other great bogus ghost in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the Headless Horseman is such a potent image that many later readers of Irving's story, and all the film versions audiences, have regretted that the Horseman turns out to be a fake.

In Irving's story the main character Ichabod Crane comes up as a perfect example of a man who ludicrously indulges himself in the belief of the existence of witchcraft, despite his own role as a supposedly good educated schoolteacher, as is demonstrated in the following excerpt:

From his half-itinerant life, also, he was a kind of travelling gazette, carrying the whole budget of local gossip from house to house, so that his appearance was always greeted with satisfaction. He was, moreover, esteemed by the women as a man of his great erudition, for he had read several books quite through, and was a perfect master of Cotton Mather's *History of New England Witchcraft*, in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed. (p. 13-14)

The above description shows exactly how Irving carefully and objectively places the taste of supernatural beliefs in the story as to build the curiosity of the readers by placing his main protagonist Ichabod Crane in the place of what people might regard as a complex figure, having duality in his schoolteacher role. Irving tries to avoid a bombastic addressing of the Headless Horseman by always describing the ghost through his characters' point of view. Further proof of Irving's

attempt to rationalize his take on the supernatural lies in his use of the Puritan America's witchcraft panic, especially by looking at Ichabod's devotion to the work of minister Cotton Mather.

Ichabod is not only pathetic in his dual participation between rationality and superstition but also timid in his attitude towards his surrounding. He enjoys being in the vicinity of Sleepy Hollow and really adores his being with the ladies of the Hollow who like to tell fearful stories and marvelous superstitions about ghosts:

Another of his sources of fearful pleasure was to pass along winter evenings with the old Dutch wives as they sat spinning by the fire, with a row of apples roasting and spluttering along the hearth, and listen to their marvelous tales of ghosts and goblins, and haunted fields, and haunted brooks, and haunted bridges, and haunted houses, and particularly of the headless horseman, or galloping Hessian of the Hollow, as they sometimes called him. (p. 16)

An irony of Ichabod's personality is that on one side, he is a cowardly man of reason who has his fear and amazement in the hair raising stories he hears from the Sleepy Hollowers; at the same time, on the other hand, he actually experiences pleasure from them. Just as what Easthope clearly adopts in his explanation from Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Fiction*, "Whereas the popular novel paints a world in which right and wrong, truth and falsehood 'are clear with statutory distinctness', the literary texts reaches certainty not easily but only by testing alternatives through irony so that certainty 'must be earned'" (p. 87-88).

How can we really judge the character of Ichabod Crane, is he really timid and cowardly man despite his background of education? Is he only timid on the outside but inside a brave man? Popular stories tend to avoid this kind of description which may have caused confusion and false impression on the readers about who are really the good characters and the bad ones. Grey areas are rarely touched on. The world is painted through black and white characterization. The hero is minimized into the representation of every virtue whereas the villain has the burden of excessive vileness. Not so in the case of Irving's story. Even the Headless Horseman receives no clear attribute whether he is the good element or the bad one. As has been mentioned previously, he is the main attraction why *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* possesses the supernatural quality it bears. What the character of the Headless Horseman represents in Irving's story is to convey the sensation and the subject matter of supernaturalism in his era, how people in his times react towards stories as extraordinary as the tale of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow. "Supernaturalism has been defined as a certain subject matter, and not the way in which this subject matter is used. Supernatural motifs and story patterns can be used in many different ways without altering their essential quality. A ghost may be simply a story mechanism designed to shout boo at the reader at the proper moment; such an approach is common enough in the lower-level horror stories" (Bleiler, p. xiv).

Lower level ghost story is certainly not what we should categorize Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* into. The essence of Irving's tale is not on the supernatural itself but on the human character's reaction towards the tales of ghosts

and other superstition. Unlike what Bleiler has stated, in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* supernaturalism acts as a way of portraying human frailties and irrelevant conducts, especially concerning the issues of the unknown and the projections of love rivalry (between Ichabod and Brom), greed (Ichabod's devouring mind's eye on Van Tassel's estate), as well as the triumph of imagination over reason (Brom wins Katrina and thwarts Ichabod's plan of intruding the land).

Fear and terror in the story are built through the framework of Ichabod Crane's comical paranoia, not through some convincing accounts of the existence of a real ghost or goblin. How often does Ichabod actually become afraid of his own topic of discussion with the ladies and is influenced by the sound he makes himself.

What fearful shapes and shadows beset his path amidst the dim and ghastly glare of a snowy night! With what wistful look did he eye every trembling ray of light streaming across the waste fields from some distant window! How often was he appalled by some shrub covered with snow, which, like a sheeted specter, beset his very path! How often did he shrink with curdling awe at the sound of his own steps on the frosty crust beneath his feet; and dread to look over his shoulder, lest he should behold some uncouth being tramping close behind him! And how often was he thrown into complete dismay by some rushing blast, howling among the trees, in the idea that it was the Galloping Hessian on one of his nightly scourings! (p.17)

Every detail on the frightening situation is told by Irving through Ichabod's point of view. In a popular fiction, the author would certainly choose a way in which

he can generate the effect of this frightening situation by way of sensational narratives, straight-to-the-point structures which foreground actions over deeper motivations. This is exactly what Easthope calls as a difference in textuality which distinguishes high literature from popular genre (p. 86).

In popular work, according to Easthope, motivation is explicit and unproblematic, and the only passage of psychological complexity is wildly unconvincing (p. 86). The fear and scary atmosphere in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* are mostly constructed through the influence of Ichabod's inner feelings. We are guided into believing that this Ichabod, a man of reason for his position as a schoolteacher, is a complex being, generating a sense of pity and disgust at the same time because he is placed in such an ironic situation. His mind is split between his own pride and knowledge as a pedagogue but on the contrary, he acts foolishly by taking into account all the fearful tall tales he has been hearing from the very people whose children he educates:

All these, however, were mere terrors of the night, phantoms of the mind that walk in darkness; and though he had seen many specters in his time, and been more than once beset by Satan in diverse shapes, in his lonely perambulations, yet daylight put an end to all these evils; and he would have passed a pleasant life of it, in despite of the devil and all his works, if his path had not been crossed by a being that causes more perplexity to mortal man than ghosts, goblins, and the whole race of witches, put together, and that was—a woman. (p.17-18).

Irving, nevertheless, playfully intermingles his take on Ichabod's fear and ludicrousness of the supernatural with Ichabod's quest for love thus representing the perplexity of man over woman. Humorously, Irving creates a wily comparison between all the creatures of darkness with a woman and puts to the trial Ichabod's no win-win situation in both cases. Ichabod Crane becomes the representation of a complete loser, having no courage to go against his mind-clouding obstacles in the forms of 'intangible' ghouls and demons and the highly visible woman (one of his own pupils, Katrina Van Tassel).

The middle part of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* deals more inwardly towards the deeper significance of Ichabod's hope of love and of his first formidable flesh and blood adversary, Brom Van Brunt. At this point, Irving's narration really abandons the supernatural foundation it has built since the beginning. The subject of the Headless Horseman and other bewitching legends of Sleepy Hollow are put into a dormant state. Readers are taken to explore Ichabod's real deal with the Dutch inhabitants of Sleepy Hollow. This is such a detour of the supernatural theme introduced at the early part of the story that readers who might expect more of this gothic atmosphere.

In Irving's story, the concept of the Headless Horseman might be significant to the fact that this character without a head really symbolizes the protector of the community of Sleepy Hollow from the Yankee intruder, that is, Ichabod Crane. The horseman does not necessarily have to exist at all to deliver his function to maintain the purity of the Dutch settlement from the clutch of Ichabod's possessive commercial interest. Here we see the form of a protagonist in the shape of a vague

villain, Ichabod the hero is also Ichabod the tragic villain. A man who fills himself up to the limit with the corruptive delusions that he cannot contain.

Ichabod Crane's love for Katrina Van Tassel and his rivalry with Brom Van Brunt, Sleepy Hollow's renowned troublemaker provide the basis of his own demise from Sleepy Hollow. The merrymaking night becomes a perfect time for Brom to slip his competitor out of competition forever. Masquerading as the Headless Horseman, Brom puts the foulest trick he can use to dismiss Ichabod once and for all. The two men boast magnificently on the fantastical tales during the merrymaking; Brom making light of the galloping Hessian by saying that he has beaten the phantom in a horse race the other night whereas Ichabod refers so much to his favorite author, Cotton Mather, adding flavor with stories he has experienced in Sleepy Hollow and from his native Connecticut.

The figure of the Hessian becomes a satirical weapon of mind games between Ichabod and Brom. The quest for love has now become the quest for domination over the area. This kind of complexity in motivation and psychological depth are what the readers have to struggle hard to grasp. Supernaturalism becomes a sugar coating means of conveying a hidden yet true essence of the story: that this is not a ghost story at all; The Legend of Sleepy Hollow turns out to be a masterly-crafted vehicle of character study.

Irving's rhetoric positions background character (who function like the chorus in classical drama) and readers to react with the ambivalence to the 'ghostly' substance in this story. Sleepy Hollow, as we immediately learn, is the narrator's first choice of a locale suited to escape from life, as suggested by the line: "A

drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land, and to pervade the very atmosphere." (p. 3). To intensify this ambiguity, Irving says that "certain it is, the place still continues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in continual reverie." (p. 3-4). Therefore *Sleepy Hollow* undeniably promotes a suspension of disbelief in regard to what occurs there.

The region also sets up ideal conditions for that other kind of dream, the nightmare; and to this typicality of terror the hapless Ichabod is subjected by Brom Bones, masquerading as the headless specter of local fame, to quell Crane's passion for Katrina. Ichabod is perfectly suited for such persecution; he is such a storehouse of supernatural lore that he cannot detach himself from the hauntings that plague victims of fabled renown. Prey as he is to night fears, the schoolteacher provides ready game for ignominious (but, to his opponent's and the reader's views, nonetheless comic) defeat by the more realistic and 'heroic' Brom Bones. The victor's name may reveal another meaning: Ichabod is brought low by his own 'bones' or angular and unprepossessing physique, which finds no lasting favor with Katrina. She would rather be the beloved of daredevil Brom, whose masculine vitality courses perfectly throughout this story.

Legend though the story may be, no genuinely supernatural 'visitant' dogs Ichabod's tracks as he leaves Van Tassel's farm. His own expectations of confronting the galloping and headless spirit prime him for hallucinatory experience, although Irving cleverly manages what seems to be a meeting with a ghost, at just the spot where the legendary figure is reputedly most active. Details of this meeting

are supplied with mounting suspense to impart realism to the fantastic chase, although alternate possibilities are hinted at. The most obvious is that Brom deliberately horrifies the susceptible Ichabod by means of a ghastly prank. Second, shamefully 'used up' as he was in love, Crane's own Yankee ingenuity at saving face may have planted seeds for the story of otherworldly forces tormenting him.

Knickerbocker's conclusion, or 'postscript', which draws us back to everyday reality, combines with mentions of speculations concerning actual ghostly machinations to create indecisiveness. The very term legend in the title of Irving's story should alert attentive readers to the fact that definiteness may have no role in what happens. Altogether, mystery envelops *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

A. 2. On Romanticism

It needs to be clarified here that what the writer intends to examine on the subject of romanticism in Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is basically the element of love relationship between or among its characters; how a writer as caliber as Irving manifests the narration of romantic nature. There are three main characters in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* who get entangled in a triangular love debacle: Ichabod Crane, Katrina Van Tassel, and Brom Van Brunt.

It has been revealed in the previous discussion on supernaturalism that Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is not so much a supernatural tale as it is a character study in love exercise. The essence of the tale is that of an unrecruited

love of Ichabod Crane towards Katrina Van Tassel, who in turn marries the macho Brom Van Brunt.

“From the moment Ichabod laid his eyes upon these regions of delight, the peace of his mind was at an end, and his only study was how to gain the affections of the peerless daughter of Van Tassel” (p. 24-25). The line shows the additional and ulterior motivation behind Ichabod's affection. This complexity and also imperfection of the protagonist's inner feelings display a sense of vagueness towards the readers whether they should sympathize with Ichabod or not. Irving portrays his protagonist as a would-be man of commercial interest and the love which he is craving is not a pure love.

Unlike many of the men in his era, Ichabod is already ahead of his time, perceiving the vast land owned by Baltus Van Tassel as a future asset not to be missed: “his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit this domains, and his imagination expanded with the idea how they might be readily turned into cash” (p.22). His love for Katrina serves to function his ascend to win the blossoming lass' heart. Nonetheless, it is his hope of Katrina's love which encourages him to think beyond what has been laid down before his eyes:

The pedagogue's mouth watered as he looked upon this sumptuous promise of luxurious winter fare. In his devouring mind's eye he pictured to himself every roasting pig running about with a pudding in his belly and an apple in his mouth; the pigeons were snugly put to bed in a comfortable pie, and tucked in with a coverlet of crust; the geese were swimming in their own gravy; and the ducks pairing cozily

in dishes, like snug married couples, with a decent competency of onion sauce. (p. 21-22).

Brom, on the other hand, has absolutely every reason to seem villainous at first glance: "He was always ready for either a fight or a frolic; but had more mischief than ill will in his composition, and, with all his overbearing roughness, there was a strong dash of waggish good humor at bottom" (p26-27). Brom Bones is the figure of a bully, who threatens to necessitate whatever means to get everything his way. Katrina herself seems to be giving all the signals and responses to Brom's courting:

The rantipole hero had for the object of his uncouth gallantries, and though his amorous toyings were something like the gentle caresses and endearments of a bear, yet it was whispered that she did not altogether discourage his hopes. Certain it is, his advances were signals for rival candidates to retire, who felt no inclination to cross a lion in his amours; insomuch, that when his horse was seen tied to Van Tassel's paling, on a Sunday night, a sure sign that his master was courting, or, as it is termed, "sparking," within, all other suitors passed by in despair, and carried the war into other quarters. (p. 28).

In the event of Ichabod's longing for Katrina, we are shown to the fact that Ichabod's love is not that of a pure love but a corrupted one; filled with the desire to acquire the vast property of the wealthy Baltus Van Tassel whereas Brom Bones, despite his brutal fierceness, seems to possess no such commercial thought like Ichabod. His love is perhaps more towards the savage, primordial courting than that of a sophisticated one; it is a love nevertheless.

Katrina Van Tassel herself, is not much described in action throughout Irving's story, preferring her to be a passive object of love of many men in Sleepy Hollow. "She was a blooming lass of fresh eighteen, plump as a partridge, ripe and melting and rosy-cheeked as one of her father's peaches, and universally famed, not merely for her beauty, but her vast expectations" (p.18). All the physical features are revealed as to show just how she can become the focus of adoration of so many men, of whom Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt are included. Yet Irving's minimum description gives the readers more freedom to judge on how Katrina is really like.

In a popular work, we will not encounter such a complication on love motif, the hero (who is not coincidentally always handsome) is always the one who possesses the ability to project his true love, winning the competition by way of heroic as well as romantic paths; and the damsel in distress will eventually merit her unity with the hero and their true love makes them live happily ever after. Irving's narration suggests many twists and witty sarcasm as he takes his observation on the ridiculousness of men in love, not the sentimentality nor the passion.

The romance in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* shows us that in a way a love story does not necessarily end in a happy ending; it does not prioritize pleasure over reality. Utopian drive is deferred for a much more reality-based narration: that in love everyone has the chance of either being happy or miserable. Ichabod, our hero, is not a romantic man whose primary target is to earn a pure love for his heartthrob. Brom Bones, who wins the competition, is not at all honest in his way of courting the blossoming Katrina. He masquerades as the headless ghost of Sleepy

Hollow and manages to take advantage of Ichabod's hilarious fear for his own benefit. More over, the story is left open-ended in such a way that readers are directed to assume that it has been Brom Bones who deceives Ichabod to flee the town by posing as the reputable specter of local fame.

B. The 1999 Film *Sleepy Hollow*

B. 1. On Supernaturalism

Supernaturalism in the 1999 film version of *Sleepy Hollow* comes as something which is over the top and sensational. Anyone going to see film director Tim Burton's screen adaptation endeavor of Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, with hopes of viewing a careful enactment of the original Irving's story, will be disappointed. Burton retains almost nothing from the original story other than character names, the terrifying Headless Horseman and part of the title. What Burton creates in its place is a visually striking film, although a bit conventional in its plot. Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* infers this situation by stating that "there will be erudition, the perusal of written works, the interplay of their authors' opinions; this interplay may well, in some cases, possess an indicative value, not so much because of the agreement it produces as because of the disagreement" (p. 55-56). Therefore it is legitimate that every author has every right to put his own taste and opinion towards his work.

Set in 1799, the story centers on a New York City detective/ pathologist Ichabod Crane (Johnny Depp) who is sent up the Hudson to investigate a series of beheadings in the small town of Sleepy Hollow. Crane, a man of reason, is determined to uncover scientific explanations for all of the mysterious killings. He reaches Sleepy Hollow with a bagful of the latest forensic technology of his own design, but meets more than he bargained for.

He arrives in a town where even the buildings seem cloistered together in a protective huddle against the terrors beyond its borders. Crane stays at the residence of Sleepy Hollow's number one citizen, Baltus Van Tassel (Michael Gambon), where he meets the dour-looking group which constitutes the town elders. The elderly gravely tell him of the Hessian mercenary whose bloodlust was legendary in their area, but who ultimately met a grizzly end himself. They are convinced that the Hessian mercenary has returned from hell, and is riding again, headless, through their fair community.

Crane becomes increasingly ensconced in the intrigues of the small town and also meets his love interest, Baltus Van Tassel's daughter, Katrina (Christina Ricci). Although he is convinced that a human is responsible for the deaths of the town's citizens, his conviction falters when he himself witnesses the Headless Horseman decapitate the town magistrate. Forced to reevaluate his earlier conclusions, he is confronted with his own struggle between superstition and reason.

Tim Burton, who directed *Batman* and *Edward Scissorhands*, has put an incredible amount of effort into the atmospherics of the film, creating an eerie

landscape that perpetually hovers between fall and winter. What is perhaps most surprising is how successful the atmospheric are in carrying the film. Although the plot follows a fairly standard framework of serial killer thrillers, it does not seem to matter much. The film is more about the journey taken than the destination, and Burton works hard to ensure that his audiences are thoroughly enjoying their trip through his sallow, gothic landscape. The film was largely shot on sets, and at times the landscape is happily contrived. Audiences are meant to know that they are in a fairy-tale land, where trees bleed and mists extinguish torches.

Johnny Depp, who in no way resembles the character of Irving's story, gives an outstanding performance as Ichabod Crane and has remade Crane into a high-strung, faint-hearted but carefully poised detective. Depp's comic timing is precise, giving well-controlled expressions of mortification as the internal fluids of the cadavers he probes repeatedly squirt him in the face. Indeed, the entire cast gives strong performances, right up to the moment of their decapitations.

Burton's eccentric eye for detail is particularly present in his fastidious portrayals of the decapitations. He is very exuberant in showing the audiences heads rolling and spinning like tops on their spinal cords, in fact, that he gives a huge hint as to who controls the horseman by not showing one character's alleged decapitation. Despite the numerous beheadings, the violence is not graphic in the same way as a film like, *Seven*, for example. Much of the gore and horror is tongue-in-cheek and has the campy feel of old Hammer horror films.

However, the film goes a bit flat in the end, as far as popular culture is concerned, where all loose ends are neatly tied up and justice is predictably meted

out to the film's evildoers. The film also stalls somewhat in the flashbacks to Crane's childhood, where the audiences are given the mandatory psychological profile to explain his current struggle against superstition. Although visually stunning, these scenes feel somewhat superfluous and lack the wit of the rest of the film.

Sleepy Hollow, like many fairy tales, is enjoyable although not particularly substantial. It is worth losing ourselves in its moody environments for a couple of hours, provided we do not mind watching a few heads roll in the process.

The most apparent and significant change which contributes to the element of supernaturalism in this screen adaptation of Irving's story is the Headless Horseman himself. Whereas in Irving's original story, the Headless Horseman is elusive and unproved to be a genuine ghost, in the film *Sleepy Hollow* he is as real and tangible as any other flesh and blood character. To extremize the horror, the horseman even kills a few people in the process. A vulgarity is taken and complexity in the original story is dumped. The physical feature of the Headless Horseman becomes a necessity to build the intensification of an extraordinarily supernatural being in the film version. It is the iconic (visual) as opposed to verbal importance which underlines the film's popular cultural discourse. This is exactly in accordance with what Easthope mentions which is "that the discourses of popular culture were already iconic and so predisposed for visual representation" (p. 95). Easthope even goes further by mentioning that "the iconic feature, not detectable by the traditional literary reading, suggests how popular culture is doing something specific and different from high culture" (p. 95). Therefore the fact that the film *Sleepy Hollow* chooses the path of the iconic over the verbal is the proof of its popular cultural root.

The plot is clearly about the forces of good versus evil, another sign that the film's supernatural genre is taken because of its frankness in fantasy rather than reality. In fact, Easthope also says that popular culture is so charged, so apt a vehicle for fantasy. Although there are attempts to put some background story behind the existence of the killer Hessian soldier, this fact does not contribute much to enrich the perplexity of the story; it is merely there to explain to audiences that this headless horseman returns from his death for a reason. This also explains the compelling of singular reading of the discourse, which is the film's entertaining value. The displays of some amazing beheading scenes by the Headless Horseman are put into effect because, as Easthope says, physical violence preoccupies the narrative because the body almost transparently reveals presence, intention and 'a moral universe'. The Headless Horseman is 'real' and his presence is crucial in delivering the film's necessary externality.

However, violence is balanced with a good dose of humor as to retain Irving's original mixture between the horrifying and the amusing. Retaining very little from the original story does not mean that the filmmakers are not influenced by it. Michel Foucault in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* states:

Then there is the notion of influence, which provides a support – of too magical a kind to be very amenable to analysis – for the facts of transmission and communication; which refers to an apparently causal process (but with neither rigorous delimitation nor theoretical definition) the phenomena of resemblance or repetition. (p. 21).

The decapitation scenes are shown with the flair of comedic taste as seen from the rotating heads just before they are taken away by the horseman. Awkwardly, Ichabod Crane has to contend with his own disgust to perform his dutiful autopsy on the dead bodies, as if to show the audiences that this Ichabod is still not flawless and, as a detective, occasionally steps into the wrong territories of investigation.

The characters are easy to distinguish one from another based on attitudes and seemingly clear motivations. Ichabod Crane is the good guy thus it is necessary to reinvent him from a lowly schoolteacher into the role of a constable/detective so that audiences can sympathize and feel more comfortable with him. Katrina Van Tassel, who becomes the hero's love interest, fulfills her role in the feminine sexuality, as an object of affection and also the center of heterosexual desire. She remains in the role of a damsel in distress, much like in any other chivalric adventure, waiting for her prince charming to come to the rescue. There is, however, one positive side to this screen version of Katrina Van Tassel: Christina Ricci's Katrina, more than answering to Irving's description ("a blooming lass of fresh eighteen, plump as a partridge, ripe and melting and rosy-cheeked as one of her father's peaches"), is as devoted to her strange beauty (unlike Irving's shallow description) as she is to Ichabod's good deeds.

Another significant character who undergoes quite a severe revamping from the original version is Brom Bones, who at one time in the film revisits the one moment from Irving's story, in which he disguises himself as the Headless Horseman to scare off Ichabod. Whereas, Irving says this fact in a vague

description ("which led some to suspect that he knew more about the matter than he chose to tell."), the film managed to do this in a funny visual sequences. The confrontation between Ichabod Crane and Brom Bone becomes an unimportant issue in the film, favoring for the more menacing Hessian as the true villain of Ichabod's as well as the final revelation of the mystery human antagonist.

The film's director Tim Burton has certain characteristics in his films of dark and moody atmosphere. It is the key to Burton's universe that only the truly terrified and alone, like Bruce Wayne in *Batman* (1989) or Winona Ryder's character in *Beetlejuice* (1988), can face up to the monsters and earn the reward of romantic fulfillment. Sigmund Freud's repressed ego surfaces here in his film's character. The writer quotes from Easthope's conception of popular culture in relation to the psychological drives behind it:

In this economy of desire *plaisir* contrasts with *jouissance*. That is, popular cultural discourse, committed as totally as it is to the imaginary, can express and contain an object of desire only within the controlling purview of the I – to do otherwise would prejudice the stability of the I or risk activating the superego and its censure: high cultural discourse, whose subject is already acknowledged as an I in relation to the superego, is able to maintain its coherence even in the face of a potentially destabilishing expression of desire. (p. 97).

The film's supernaturalism is a form of indulging oneself into the repressed idealism not manifested in real life. It is a voluptuous vehicle driven to stir amazement and joyful fright from its audiences, who certainly possess the

willingness to accept the many implausibilities and absurdities found within the film's narrative.

B. 2. On Romanticism

A simple love story remains in the cloister of the supernatural element. Ichabod Crane comes into Sleepy Hollow as a man who seems devoid of any romantic drive towards the opposite sex. Instead of Ichabod showing his first move to get the girl, it is actually Katrina who makes the first move towards him (ignited by a first kiss in a game). The romance is set up easily and almost without any obstacles for the hero. Brom Bones, who in the film is already engaged to Katrina, shows no convincing bonding with his soon to be wife. Instead of acting as an engaged girl, this Katrina displays her true affection to Ichabod Crane and almost surprisingly never actually engage in an intimate conversation with Brom, later to be slaughtered by the Hessian ghost. The love relationship is visual rather than psychological because it is what the audiences will see in the film.

The mirror image of the twentieth century's dysfunctional family life is apparent in the condition of the Van Tassel family household. Father Baltus Van Tassel is a number one citizen in a town filled with corruption and vain hatred, mother Lady Van Tassel turns out to be a stepmother bent on destroying the family circle in which she inhabits, daughter Katrina is finding her escape within the embrace of an outsider, Ichabod Crane.

The casting of Johnny Depp, a popular young actor in Hollywood, is another matter which signifies the film's actual departure from Irving's story. The figure of

Ichabod Crane in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is highly unlikely to gain a sympathy from the audiences for beside his ungainly appearance ("tall, but exceedingly lank with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels; small head, flat at top, huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose"), he is not such a nice guy after all. Essential to the look of on-screen Ichabod Crane in *Sleepy Hollow* is the visual presence—face, body, voice-of Johnny Depp, who can look awkward at times but can throw a punch or two if necessary.

Complications in the romance are not as complex as those found in the original, solutions are quickly established and whether it is hard to accept this fact or not, the hero will always come out of the obstacles, regaining faith after a temporary loss in the process, defeating the forces of evil (no matter how big they are), and successfully taking the girl away out of the misery in order to be together again. The looks of the actors and the actresses are definitely there to sell the film as it was motivated by the commercial value. The film needs to be larger in life, not necessarily have to be true to the reality, and also the original source. It takes the liberty to renovate largely on Irving's out of date and less commercial narration to make it accommodative for the contemporary taste of popular culture.

By seeing the overall aspects of both the narratives of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and the film *Sleepy Hollow*, we can see that complications are complex and multi-layered in Irving's story whereas in the film version there are simplicities of character traits and motives. Meanings are connotative in Irving's work, mostly due

to the many interpretations which one can attribute to what actually has happened to Crane.

The Headless Horseman is vaguely stated in the original story, positioning it between a real horrific figure as well as the representation of mindless superstitious beliefs of Ichabod Crane; in the film, the Horseman becomes the literal as well as tangible manifestation of sensational villain to sell the film.

Action superimposes motivation in the film, making the message clearly spelt out that this is about good versus evil, whereas Irving makes his work a vehicle for delivering the ridiculousness of the rural people implicitly. Audience recognize quickly that the film is more about physical conduct rather than psychological journey, hence meaning is immediately conveyed through the action.

The story by Irving can be interpreted in such a variety of ways that the appeal becomes universally recognized; some might refer to it as a ghost story, others a character study, perhaps even a historical portrait of early American life. Its plurality transcends the age.

The irony of the situation is also apparent in Irving's story by putting Ichabod as both scholarly and ludicrously superstitious. Though the film managed to implement this by applying flaws to Ichabod as a constable, it never really serves a convincing depiction.

Lastly, of course, is the visual image versus the verbal language in the depiction of the narratives. The film relies heavily on the visual elements to achieve the mood and sophistication of the story. This can inflict a more immediate

connection to the audience as opposed to the deferred meaning of the original work.

C. The Essence of Differences

The textual differences apparent so far between Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and the film version *Sleepy Hollow* can be set out as follows:

<i>The Legend of Sleepy Hollow</i>	<i>Sleepy Hollow</i>
complex	simple
connotation	denotation
figurative	literal
meaning deferred	meaning immediate
implicit	explicit
plural	univocal
moral reflection	physical action
verbal	visual (iconic)
ironic	unironic

This kind of listing, like what Antony Easthope says, although it does not actually contain a plus and a minus, an explicit and positive valuation of the first column (the high cultural discourse) with a corresponding depreciation of the second, reveals how hard it is to give a neutral summary and how deeply the very

terms of these polarized oppositions are already embedded in a social and cultural assessment. Some people might prefer the deferred to immediate: high culture over the popular one. Others, and they are the majority, might favor the opposite.

The film hovers heavily within the preconstructed path of plot which will place the hero in an extraordinarily unusual condition, throw in a love interest or two, put a seemingly indestructible challenge or conflict and give the hero a major chance to overcome all this. Formulaic as it is, the path taken by the plot is not limited only to popular cultural discourse, but also adopted by many works of high cultural origin, such as in Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Kipling's *The Jungle Book*.

As a film, *Sleepy Hollow* is crafted to be the manifestation of visual storytelling which, in turn, emphasizes its iconic representation of discourse into the main factor in building the business side of its artistic value. The cinema needs to be effective in its deliverance of message, hence the singularity in its meaning and its immediacy to invoke feedback from the audiences. The film is not out there to be a device of contemplation; it is there for its entertaining value, for its pleasant appeal to the mass society, therefore it has to function as a popular cultural discourse. The more audiences it can attract, the more chance it can serve its ultimate task as an artistic commodity, thus secures the financial risks its producers are willing to tackle in order to produce it.

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, on the other hand, was at the beginning only a small, personal story within these whole essays and sketches collection which even the author Washington Irving had no vague hopes that it would someday be as big a commercially produced art form as it is now. The story is told in such a frankness

and subtle reportage punctuated by the many layers of narrators it has, imbuing the readers' half participant role as to convey ambiguity and many different interpretations(plurality) of its original message and genre. It is not certainly easy to point out in which category *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* belongs to, but readers are torn among its supernatural, satirical, picturesque, and romantic nostalgia of the American landscape that they are not aware that Irving actually adopted the story from German sources. Nevertheless, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* remains rich in its literary appeal as well as the folktale-style narratives used by Irving. It deserves the inclusion into the literary canon.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION