

Chapter I

Introduction

A. Background of the Study

Supernaturalism and romanticism that the writer intends to explore in this thesis are two of the most prominent genres in prose literature. In fact, according to E. F. Bleiler in his introduction to *Supernatural Fiction Writers Volume I*, romanticism was actually an international cultural movement marked with the heavy use of supernaturalism around the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century (p. xv). Supernaturalism (especially in literature) deals with our preference to clutter our mind with things unknown to our rational thoughts, mostly having to do with things related to death, spirits, and life beyond death. Indeed, according to Bleiler, while a materialist would say that death is final, a writer of supernatural fiction can suggest other possibilities: ghosts that walk; heavens or hells rejoice or sweat in; second chances via reincarnation; or flights of the soul through the universe (p. xiii). Romanticism, on the other hand, offers the kind of narration which evokes our fantasy of grand happenings, including the beauty of love which is usually between a man and a woman. These two genres are apparently existent to satisfy the imagination and to evoke pleasure for our mind.

The idea that literature is supposed to evoke pleasure provides the perfect basis of argument over high culture versus popular culture. It is the writer's aim in this thesis to observe the distinction of high culture and popular culture. As the basis

of this study of high culture versus popular culture, the writer has chosen Washington Irving's long short story entitled *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* mainly because of the fact that the story presents strong elements of supernaturalism and romanticism; which are themes often found in both works of high culture and popular culture. Moreover, it is also driven by the fact that this simple tale can actually provide a great concept of visualization when it is adapted into a popular film. The reason is, ever since it was published as a short story in the collected version *The Sketch Book*, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* has been recognized widely as showing off Irving's extraordinary trait of picturesque depiction of life and custom-bound society of his time, which though fictional and humorous, actually conveys a vivid and true portrayal of the early American landscape and people. This everlasting quality of Irving's tale is proven when Hollywood recently decided to adapt *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* into a big-budget motion picture that goes by the title *Sleepy Hollow* or *Tim Burton's Sleepy Hollow*, referring to the director of the film.

There have been many discussions recently over the fixed distinction between what is considered high culture in literature and what is not. Some literary scholars believe strongly the idea that literature in any piece of work outside the realm of great literature is to be dismissed as not worthy of literary treatment. Antony Easthope states in *Literary Into Cultural Studies* that every literary conceptualization about those two extremes seems to have the same valuation: high culture is good, popular culture is bad (p. 79). This will seem like a cruel judgment towards any work of arts which is commonly labeled as popular culture.

It is this, so to speak, prejudiced treatment against popular literature, also known as one part of popular culture, which encourages the writer to conduct an analysis on the distinction between literary canon and popular literature, both of which are parts of the high culture/popular culture dichotomy. As the main subject of analysis, the writer has chosen the subject of popularization of a literary work by way of adapting it into a film form, another expression of arts categorized as one type of twentieth century popular culture.

The writer's choice for a film in comparison with a printed literary work on which the film is based is due to the fact that film or motion picture has been so closely associated with our popular culture these days; the film medium has become identical with the dynamic taste of our entertainment and aesthetic culture. As a form of artistic media, the art of filmmaking plays a big role in shaping today's notion of popular culture, especially with Hollywood, as the center of the film industry in the world, providing a great number of films which become ubiquitously available almost everywhere around the world. It is a commercialized form of art in which audiences share their feelings, attention and emotion inside a movie theater to escape the real world, at least for a moment, and thrust themselves into the world of make-believe reality throughout the duration of the film. This is almost similar with a literary work, like a novel or a short story, which can produce the sense of actually being absorbed into the story's universe in order to witness the marvel of the writer's imagination. Although, perhaps, reading a literary work might not be experienced in a group of people like watching a film, both media actually present

the same basic premise, that is, to take the readers and audiences away from their present reality and into the imaginary vision of the author or filmmakers.

Clearly these two versions of the same material will both carry their own distinctive qualities that distinguish one from the other. The original work can be regarded as the literary canon version because Irving definitely wrote the story without any intention of making it a commercial success. In *The Cambridge History of American Literature Volume 1*, it is stated that Irving deliberately avoided the novel, a popular form of writing, as his genre; choosing the forms of the essay serial, the sketch, the history instead (p. 661). His being heralded as "Father of American Literature" gives further proof to his works to be recognized as high literature (p. 661). The film, on the other hand, tends to be more popular culture-esque in its shape because of its visual nature. This visual emphasis gives the film its claim to be a popular work of art. Antony Easthope in *Literary Into Cultural Studies* says that the great contemporary media such as newspapers, film, radio, and television share the same condition of existence, which was modern technology, particularly in visual reproduction (p.76). To focus the study, the writer will discuss mainly on the differentiation of values –on supernaturalism and romanticism- which can determine how a work can be called as a literary canon or a popular culture one.

It is inevitable that in discussing the film as a work of art, elements such as the technicalities and commercial decisions behind the making of the film will also be examined; but only as to support the analysis on these two different kinds of artistic media. The writer's main concern is still on the creative output in the form of

the finished products in relation with the classification into the literary canon as well as popular culture.

A great signifying factor that separates the creative processes of the writing of a literary work and the making of a film is the fact that a literary work is done by a single individual as the sole mastermind behind the work, whereas in a filmmaking process hundreds of people are employed and they contribute their skills to the work in one way or another. Nevertheless, the creativity and the decisions that finally shape the whole dimension of a film are principally in the hands of the director. Albert Hunt states in *The Popular Arts: A Critical Reader* that a film is, basically, an arrangement of moving pictures and recorded sounds, and that the man responsible for this arrangement is the director (p.233).

It is the writer's attempt to explore the gap between high culture (represented here by Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*) and popular culture (the film version *Sleepy Hollow*). Hopefully, with this study there will be a better understanding of the distinction between high culture and popular culture within the study of literature in general, and English literature in particular. As an additional advantage, the literary community should begin to broaden their understanding of literature as a part of the whole cultural aspects of our civilization.

B. Statement of the Problem

The writer has formulated the problems and would like to seek out answers to these following questions:

1. What are the apparent textual differences –which lie in the depiction of supernaturalism and romanticism- that set high cultural discourse (the original work) apart from the popular one?
2. Does the film version *Sleepy Hollow* follow certain formulaic predetermined rules (mainly on supernaturalism and romanticism) often associated with the popular culture?
3. What things contribute to the distinction between *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* as a literary canon/high culture and the film *Sleepy Hollow* as a popular culture?

C. Objective of the Study

The main purpose set to be achieved in this thesis is to analyze and examine closely the debatable distinction between high culture/literature and popular culture.

It is also important to notify here that a film, because of its strong visual nature, is already categorized as being popular culture, regardless of the story or content which it narrates. Therefore, in discussing the film *Sleepy Hollow*, the writer initially categorized it as the representative of popular culture.

There are three objectives which the writer aims to achieve in this thesis:

- Firstly, considering the binary opposition between high culture and popular culture, the writer would like to find out what textual differences there are that set high culture (the original work) apart from popular culture.

- Secondly, the writer would like to find out whether the film *Sleepy Hollow* follows certain formulaic predetermined rules often associated with popular culture.
- Finally, the writer is determined to uncover the things which contribute to the distinction between *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* as a literary canon/ high culture and the film *Sleepy Hollow* as a popular culture.

In conclusion, the aim of the study is to observe the relationship between high culture/literary canon and popular culture.

D. Significance of the Study

By examining the absurdities which lie within the boundary between high culture and popular culture, in this case between Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and the film version entitled *Sleepy Hollow*, hopefully we, the literary scholars as well as students of English literature, can broaden our horizon of thinking beyond the limitation of literary canon. How the term "literature" can actually apply to both literary canon and popular culture alike. The writer hopes that this study will open up a new perspective in viewing the vast terminology of literature.

As an additional advantage of this kind of study is that, for those who have not found familiarity between the world of literature and filmmaking field, it will beneficially create a new insight towards both arts and bridge a gap of exclusiveness that sets one arts from the other. It will be valuable for students of literature to be familiar with the arts of filmmaking, because both have formed a long

alliance together in terms of the subject of storytelling. To recognize that despite the different media, the world of filmmaking and literature share so many similar traits, both as arts and fields of study.

E. Theoretical Background

In analyzing the problem in this study, the writer does not employ the use of any conventional literary theory, but rather with the approach of a kind of discourse called cultural studies. This is especially important in exploring the issues regarding high culture and popular culture. For that matter, the writer puts forward two different versions of the same story, one is an original and widely recognized as a form of high literature, the other is a derivative work, considered to be a form of popular culture.

The application of cultural studies upon the issue of high culture versus popular culture demands an extensive exploratory understanding not only on literature but also on the overall idea of the nature of culture. It is important to note here that cultural studies does not base itself on the idea of an individual theorist like in most cases of literary theories but actually consists of the discourses on the issue by many critics and theorists. When applied to literature, cultural studies relate to aspects as broad as society and culture together with phenomena which happen and affect our civilization, especially in arts.

F. Scope and Limitation

To keep this study remain focused on its analysis, the writer narrows down the discussion and examination only on the aspects of supernaturalism and romanticism in both high culture and popular culture as well as on the nature of each opposing side. How each side, high culture and popular culture, portrays the style of the genre distinctively.

The writer will touch on the subjects of filmmaking and authors not as the main concern of the study but merely as supportive data that might provide thorough comprehension over the different media between a printed work and a film.

G. Method of the Study

This study is done by way of intensive library research as well as internet research to support the analysis of the problems. What is meant by library research here is a process to find information which is useful to help the writer direct his research. It functions to expand the knowledge of the writer on previous studies that have come before the writer's own study as well as on the information and data that the writer intends to use on his problem analysis. With this library research the writer continues to gather related information about Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and a glimpse into the life of Washington Irving. The writer also tries to gather information from books dealing with the subject of cultural studies and approaches that will be used in the analysis. For the analysis on the film, the

writer conducts an extensive research on books of film and filmmaking industry. Additionally, the use of internet in this research is for the complementary requirements to obtain the latest data and information regarding the original tale and the film.

The writer intends to use descriptive-analytical method in conveying his ideas. There will be a descriptive explanation based on the high culture/popular culture issues found in the original tale and the film through the events, actions, and dialogues in the story. The method is applied based on the original story and the film version and will be supported by data and information, which has been collected from the writer's research relating to the topic.

H. Definition of Key Terms:

- **Cultural Studies:** a recent development of literary studies in which the works of arts and literature are to be seen within the context of socio-cultural framework that encloses the human aesthetic civilization.
- **High Culture:** works of arts or literature which are commonly regarded as highly qualified and valuable (not characterized by commercial drive as in popular culture) and that the values of these works transcend time.
- **Popular Culture:** a phenomenon in arts and literature of the twentieth century, marked especially by the commercial interest and is aimed to satisfy the popular demand of the mass culture.

- **Romanticism: a story of love, adventure, strange happenings, etc., often set in a distant time or place, whose events are happier or grander or more exciting than those of real life.**
- **Supernaturalism: all things that are not explained by natural laws but, especially, by the powers of spirits, gods, magic; matters and experiences connected with the unknown forces and spirits.**

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK