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**EUROPEAN CULTURE IN “THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW”:  
REFLECTIONS ON THE AMERICAN HALLOWEEN**

**CAMPINA GRANDE**

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Final paper presented for the Modern Languages Course (English), in the State University of Paraíba, as a requirement to graduate as an English teacher.

**Area of concentration:** Literature and culture of English-speaking peoples.

**Supervisor:** Prof. Me. Joselito Porto de Lucena

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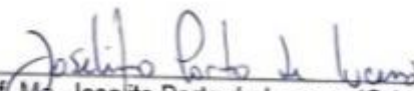
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To God for making my dream of studying at this institution come true. To my mother, Joseana Martiniana, for presenting to me the way of education. To my friend, Wladimir Balbino, who I consider a brother. To my friend, Priscila Sales, for being present at all times. To my godfather, Damião Souza, for who I have great admiration. To my friend, Luiz Eduardo Miranda, for who I have great appreciation and to my cousin, Gilson Vieira, who I like very much, I DEDICATE.

“Though Americans like to think of themselves as the properties of a young nation, the truth is that America is a modern expression of an old civilization with its roots deep in the Christian, feudal, medieval West.”

William Cullen Dennis

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AD	ANNO DOMINI
BCE	BEFORE THE COMMON ERA
USA	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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**EUROPEAN CULTURE IN “THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW”:  
REFLECTIONS ON THE AMERICAN HALLOWEEN**

**CULTURA EUROPEIA EM “THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW”:  
REFLEXÕES SOBRE O HALLOWEEN AMERICANO**

Filipe Martiniano Silva<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT**

Of bibliographic origin, this research aims to understand North American culture from elements of European folklore that were brought by immigrants to the New World. For this, we will use the short story “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1819) by Washington Irving (1783 – 1859) and we will relate the elements present in the author's work with the folklore of the countries of origin. Therefore, the general objective of this article is to find elements of European culture present in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” . Our specific objectives are: 1. Discuss the roots of Halloween. 2. Understand how Irish, Dutch and German cultures have influenced and are present in the American version of Halloween. This work is based on the theoretical contributions of Belk (1990), Rogers (1995), Manson (2006), Rousová (2008), Carter and Dart (2015), Wylde (2019), Yousaf (2021) to understand the historical origins of the Halloween. Bannatyne (1998), Amin (2018), Mayhair (2019) helped us understand the American version of Halloween. Bell (1994), Hussain (2002) explain the Irish legend of Jack-o'-Lantern. Harris (2017) and Lessing (2018) discuss the Irish legend of the Dullahan. Dale (1991) and Mambra (2021) discuss the Dutch legend of the Flying Dutchman. Nehra (2020) and Great Lakes Escape Game (2022) discuss about the legend of Rübezahl. Finally, Zhao (2016) and Irving (2019) discuss about the life of Washington Irving and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”.

**Keywords:** North American culture. Folklore. Halloween. Washington Irving.

**RESUMO**

De origem bibliográfica, essa pesquisa visa compreender a cultura norte-americana a partir de elementos do folclore europeu que foram trazidos pelos imigrantes para o Novo Mundo. Para isso, usaremos o conto “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1819) de Washington Irving (1783 – 1859) e relacionaremos os elementos presentes na obra do autor com o folclore dos países de origem. Assim sendo, o objetivo geral desse artigo é encontrar elementos da cultura europeia presente em “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”. Nossos objetivos específicos são: 1. Discutir sobre as raízes do Halloween. 2. Compreender como as culturas irlandesa, holandesa e alemã

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influenciaram e estão presentes na versão americana do Halloween. Fundamentam este trabalho, as contribuições teóricas de Belk (1990), Rogers (1995), Manson (2006), Rousová (2008), Carter e Dart (2015), Wylde (2019), Yousaf (2021) para compreendermos as origens históricas do Halloween. Bannatyne (1998), Amin (2018), Mayhair (2019), nos ajudaram a entender a versão americana do Halloween. Bell (1994), Hussain (2002) nos explicam a lenda irlandesa de Jack-o'-Lantern. Harris (2017) e Lessing (2018) discorrem sobre a lenda irlandesa do Dullahan. Dale (1991) e Mambra (2021) discursam sobre a lenda holandesa do holandês voador. Nehra (2020) e Great Lakes Escape Game (2022) discutem sobre a lenda de Rübezahl. Por fim, Zhao (2016) e Irving (2019) discorrem sobre a vida de Washington Irving e sobre "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow".

**Palavras-chave:** Cultura norte-americana. Folclore. Halloween. Washington Irving.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The roots of the Halloween, differently from what people imagine, are not in the United States of America, but they refer to the Celtic culture, which was already present in Ireland and nearby areas in 500 BCE. The traditional American party started with the ancient Samhain<sup>2</sup> festival. Over time, the celebration suffered some changes with the conquest of the Celtic territories by the Romans in 43 AD.

Other traditions were added to the ancient Celtic festival and the Catholic Church adhered to (or adopted) some of the pagan symbols, myths, legends, etc. in order to convert the Celtic people to their religion. This Christian influence resulted in the Halloween we know in the United States as the result of the migration of the European people to the New World. The new inhabitants of the land brought with themselves their traditions, which were reformulated according to the conditions of the new territory.

However, immigrants influenced not only folklore, but their culture can be seen in American literature as well. Some legends of the European folklore are present in the American literature. An American version of these legends was created, but the roots and essences were the same of Europe.

The American writer Washington Irving (1783 – 1859) used some elements of the European culture in his works, thereby mixing folklore with literature. This research aims to identify the elements of the European folklore present in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (2019)” so that we can understand the European influence on American literature. For that, we will present European legends that were possibly inspirations for the writing of the short story. Therefore, we will analyze Irving’s work through the comparison of European Legends with some excerpts from the American short story, so that we can observe the similarities between European folklore and American literature. “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” was first published in 1819; however, in this analysis, we will use a version from 2019 by Global Grey.

As Bannatyne (1998) tells us, the inculturation of Samhain mythologies, folklore and ritual practices in North America was the result of Irish migration in the first half of the 19th century due to a great famine. The following hypothesis is proposed: “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” was heavily influenced by Irish folklore, as the arrival of Irish immigrants in the USA occurred at the same time as the writing of Irving's work in the 19th century.

The curiosity to know better the life of Washington Irving and his works and the passion for American culture motivated us to carry out this research. The general objective of this article is to find elements of the European culture present in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (2019) and relate them with their countries of origin. Our specific objectives are to discuss about the roots of the Halloween and to understand how Irish, Dutch and German cultures have influenced and are present in the American version of Halloween.

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<sup>2</sup> “The word Samhain is derived from the Old Irish language for the time of this festival and is still used in modern Irish to refer to the month of November... The word might be a linguistic inversion of the Irish-language term samhradh (summer) so that Samhain means “summer’s end”, from samh, “summer” and fuin, “end” (Smyth 1996, 149). The name indicates that the festival marked the end of summer and the closing stages in the cycle of growth.” (FOLEY and O’DONNELL, 2009, p. 69).

To achieve these objectives, we decided to develop a bibliographic research that according to Fonseca (2022) is made:

[...] from the survey of theoretical references already analyzed, and published by written and electronic means, such as books, scientific articles, web site pages. Any scientific work begins with a bibliographic research, which allows the researcher to know what has already been studied on the subject. There are, however, scientific researches that are based solely on bibliographic research, looking for published theoretical references with the aim of collecting information or prior knowledge about the problem about which the answer is sought.<sup>3</sup> (FONSECA, 2002, p. 32, our translation).

We chose bibliographic research as a support to understand the presence of elements of European folklore in American literature, as well as to understand the origins of Halloween and its emergence in the USA.

Thereby, this research was divided in two moments. First of all, we sought for theoretical materials about European legends and about the arrivals of Halloween in the United States of America, where we explored about the roots of Halloween. In the second moment, analyzed we analyzed the work of Washington Irving where we explained some excerpts of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (2019)” by relating them with elements of the European culture.

This work is based on the theoretical contributions of Belk (1990), Rogers (1995), Manson (2006), Rousová (2008), Carter and Dart (2015), Wylde (2019), Yousaf (2021) to understand the historical origins of the Halloween. Bannatyne (1998), Amin (2018), Mayhair (2019) helped us understand the American version of Halloween. Bell (1994) and Hussain (2002) explain the Irish legend of Jack-o'-Lantern. Harris (2017) and Lessing (2018) discuss the Irish legend of the Dullahan. Dale (1991) and Mambra (2021) discuss the Dutch legend of the Flying Dutchman. Nehra (2020) and Great Lakes Escape Game (2022) discuss about the legend of Rübezahl. Finally, Zhao (2016) and Irving (2019) discuss about the life of Washington Irving and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”.

## 2 THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF HALLOWEEN

Before we start discussing about the Halloween in the United States of America, it is necessary to talk about the roots of Halloween to understand how it became a popular holiday in the USA.

Halloween is a very famous festival in the United States of America and it became popular in other cultures as well. Nowadays, this celebration is known in the whole world. The term Halloween means All Hallows' Eve, because it precedes All

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<sup>3</sup> [...] a partir do levantamento de referências teóricas já analisadas, e publicadas por meios escritos e eletrônicos, como livros, artigos científicos, páginas de web sites. Qualquer trabalho científico inicia-se com uma pesquisa bibliográfica, que permite ao pesquisador conhecer o que já se estudou sobre o assunto. Existem, porém, pesquisas científicas que se baseiam unicamente na pesquisa bibliográfica, procurando referências teóricas publicadas com o objetivo de recolher informações ou conhecimentos prévios sobre o problema a respeito do qual se procura a resposta. (FONSECA, 2002, p. 32).

Saints Day, a Roman Catholic tradition, which is celebrated on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Therefore, Halloween is celebrated on October 31<sup>st</sup>.

Its roots derive of the pagan Celtic culture, which was present in Ireland and nearby areas of the United Kingdom and northern France; specifically of a celebration called Samhain (sa:win), which means summer's end. The festival was the celebration of a new year. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (apud PFANDL, 2009, p.1): "In ancient Britain and Ireland, the Celtic festival of Samhain was observed on October 31, at the end of the summer. This date was also the eve of the new year in both Celtic and Anglo-Saxon times." People believed that in the end of the year the God represented by the sun had passed into the world of the dead. According to Rogers (1995, p. 463): "The festival marked the beginning of the Celtic year, when sacrificial fires were offered to the gods for the harvest, when crops and animals were gathered in for the forthcoming winter, and when prayers were offered to commemorate the dead." However, According to Bell (1994, p. 4): "At the death of summer and the old year, Bal, the chief Celtic god, symbolized by the sun, entered the kingdom of death." It would be interesting to add the information that these mythological stories happen throughout the cultures. Knowing the seasons in which the sun was higher and the day lasted longer was essential for the development of human agriculture.

Therefore, the festival also celebrated the arrival of the winter, a season that was often associated with human death due to the cold and darkness of the winter, which were associated with the death of crops and the loss of plant foliage. According to Manson (2006, p. 13): "The Celtic year was, for all intents and purposes, broken into two seasons of winter and summer." Usually, during the Samhain festival the harvest of the end of the year was happening. However, in Celtic mythology, some believe that Samhain was considered the god of death and the festival was a celebration to him. According to Carter and Dart (2015):

Some two thousand years ago, Samhain was the most important festival of the ancient Celts, celebrating a night for Samhain the god of the dead and his re-judging of those who had already died. Celts believed that spirits of the dead, both good and evil, were set free to roam in the land of the living. They put out food and drink for refreshment of the spirits of the beloved dead, whom they hoped Samhain would allow to stop in their homes. Some people also dressed up in costumes to hide from, frighten away, or lead away evil spirits for the protection of the living. (CARTER and DART, 2015, p. 103).

Thus, this is the reason why to celebrate Halloween people wear masks, costumes, make-up and become a monster, a witch, a vampire or other characters, in addition to decorating their houses, and children go from door to door asking for candies in nowadays Halloween party. However, McNamara (2014) tells us that:

Many have misinterpreted Samhain to be the Celtic god of death. This is one of the most resolute errors associated with Halloween. Research from scholars have discovered that Halloween had its origins among the ancient Celts and is based on the Samhain Festival. However, a writer in the 18<sup>th</sup> century incorrectly specified that Samhain is named after the famous Celtic "god of the dead." (MCNAMARA, 2014, p. 5).

For this reason, possibly people believed that Samhain was the god of death, as the name of the festival was associated with deities connected to the world of the

dead. However, the Celtic god of death was called Donn, as Malcolm and O'Donnell (2009) tell us.

Samhain is associated with "dark" deities connected with the underworld or death, such as the Cailleach (Hag) or Winter Crone, the Celtic God of the death Donn, and Crom Crúaich, a deity with legendary connections with ritual slaughter. The invoked in Pagan ritual is tied to the symbolic meaning of the time of year. (MALCOLM and O'DONNELL, 2009, p. 72).

According to Rousová (2008, p. 51) about Celts: "They placed lanterns carved from turnips in front of their houses. These lanterns were meant as a welcome for the dead relatives and as a protection against evil spirits." Celtic people also made bonfires to celebrate this party and to drive away evil spirits. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (apud PFANDL, 2009, p.1): "huge bonfires were set on hilltops to frighten away evil spirits." These bonfires were part of the celebration of the festival where people worshiped the pagan gods. According to History<sup>4</sup> (2021):

To commemorate the event, Druids built huge sacred bonfires, where the people gathered to burn crops and animals as sacrifices to the Celtic deities. During the celebration, the Celts wore costumes, typically consisting of animal heads and skins, and attempted to tell each other's fortunes.

However, in the festivities of the Samhain the Celtic people offered food to various gods of the Celtic culture. According to Yousaf (2021, p. 91): "The Irish mythologies were comprised of many goddesses and their folktales." Therefore, people worshiped many gods and to worship them, a human was offered in sacrifice. According to Wylde (2019, p. 15): "The sacrificial victim would be chosen by marking the underside of a piece of cake with charcoal. As one of the most important dates in the Celtic calendar it was considered a great honor to be sacrificed at Samhain."

However, in the course of time, Romans conquered the Celtic territory and the new culture there influenced the Celtic culture as well as the Samhain festival. Therefore, the Celtic culture was added to Roman culture. According to Mayhair (2019):

By 43 A.D., the Roman Empire conquered most of the Celt's territory, where two festivals of Roman origin were mixed with the festival of Samhain. The first of the two festivals added was Feralia, celebrated in late October when the Roman commemorated the dead. The second festival was to honor Pomona, the goddess of fruit and trees. (MAYHAIR, 2019, p. 1).

The Feralia as well as the Samhain celebrated the dead, and the celebration to Pomona was the worship of a goddess. Both of them have similarities with the pagan festival since the Celtic people celebrated the union between the dead and the living and they worshiped the god Samhain. These similarities with Samhain festival could be the fact that these two festivals were mixed to the Celtic festival beyond the

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<sup>4</sup> In: History. **Halloween 2021**. Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/halloween/history-of-halloween>. Accessed on: March 27, 2022.

conquest of the territory by the Romans. According to Yousaf (2021, p. 91): “The Roman festival of Lemuria refers to the days of observances like Parentalia and Feralia dedicated to the restless souls to honor and remember the spirits of loved ones by paying visits to the graves and leaving with gifts grains, salts, bread soaked in the wine, etc.”

After these events, the Catholic Church decided to bring some pagan symbols and legends inside the church in an attempt to Christianize Ireland and its rituals. The Celtic lands had huge influence of the Christianity around the ninth century. According to Yousaf (2021, p. 95): “The myths attached with the rituals and practices include Jack-o’-lanterns, dressing in colorful costumes, painting scary faces...” These pagan beliefs were introduced in the conquered territory.

Therefore, Celtic beliefs were mixed with other traditions. According to Mayhair (2019, p. 15): “It’s believed that the church was trying to replace the Celtic Festival of dead with a church-sanctioned holiday.” Since many Europeans had abandoned their old religions and started to follow Christianity. According to Wylde (2019, p. 15): “The Catholic Church, under the direction of Pope Gregory III adopted the attitude that all those festive rites which could not be removed would instead be re-appropriated.” This is what happened to Samhain and it was reformulated according to the patterns of the church. According to Belk (1990, p. 2): “Despite the rise of Christianity, Samhain practices continued for hundred years in the British Isles. Eventually the Christian Church realized that it was more effective to try to take over pagan holidays than to oppose them.”

Due to the migration of European people to the New World, some of their myths and legends were carried with them. In the next section, we will discuss about the arrival of Halloween in the United States of America.

## **2.1 Halloween in the United States of America**

This section will present the arrival of the Halloween tradition in the USA, as well as the habits that people have during the celebration of this famous American holiday nowadays.

When Europeans arrived in the USA, they found Native Americans there. The European tradition mixed with the tradition of the Native Americans and a new version of the Halloween was created. According to Mayhair (2019, p. 1): “The celebrations included public events to celebrate the harvest. To celebrate, neighbors would share stories, tell fortunes, dance and sing.” We can observe this in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” when Ichabod was invited to a party. According to Irving (2019):

As Ichabod jogged slowly on his way, his eye, ever open to every symptom of culinary abundance, ranged with delight over the treasures of jolly autumn. On all sides he beheld vast stores of apples; some hanging in oppressive opulence on the trees; some gathered into baskets and barrels for the market... (IRVING, 2019, p. 17).

Beyond harvest that can be represented by the plenty, we can observe the dance and the storytelling present in Irving’s work. According to Irving (2019, p. 20): “When the dance was at an end, Ichabod was attracted to a knot of the sager folks, with old Van Tassel, sat smoking at one end of the piazza, gossiping over former times, and drawing out long stories about war”.

However, Yousaf (2021, p. 95) tells us that: “Halloween has evolved from the ethnic festival to the merger of street carnivals, fright nights, and has become a massive commercial enterprise concern.” Nowadays, Halloween is the second biggest holiday in the USA. Only Christmas holiday is bigger than Halloween in American territory. However, this tradition in the USA started with the Irish people. According to Bannatyne (1998):

The Irish influence and the enculturation through the mythologies, folklores, cultural practices and the Samhain rituals into the continent of North America was due to the Irish immigrants. With the migrations process and the repatriations due to the great wave of famines of the first half of the nineteenth century by the mid of the twentieth century, the Irish Celtic Samhain transformed into the Christian Halloween started as a children’s day off and then evolved into a national-public holiday. (BANNATYNE 1998 apud YOUSAF, 20221, p. 95)

However, the Halloween celebration as we know today in the USA had some changes of the Samhain rituals since the Irish people were in a new territory and the American people also influenced the ancient celebrations. According to Mayhair: (2019, p. 1): “By the 1800s, the Halloween we know today was created. People started to move towards partying and celebrating as a community instead of focusing on witchcraft, magic, and evil spirits.”

The huge influence of the American Halloween was due to Irish people; however, before the migration of Irish people to the USA, the American people had some knowledge about the celebration, because the USA was colonized by England, a country that had ties with the festival. According to Amin (2018, p. 4): “Mostly people of America at the beginning was English who already been known about Halloween, but at the same time Irish and Scottish also migrated to North America.” The traditions of Halloween were already present in the New World, because the USA was colonized by England.

Jack-o’-lanterns was an Irish legend that brought huge influence in the Halloween festival present in the USA. Therefore, it is necessary to talk about the legend in the next section there will be present a brief description of this legend.

### **3. THE IRISH LEGEND OF JACK-O’-LANTERNS**

This section will discuss about the Irish legend of Jack-o’-lanterns, which had great importance in the Halloween of the USA that we know nowadays. As Ireland was a polytheist country in the times of the Samhain festival, the country was full of mythology and beliefs. People had their own protection against ghosts and evil spirits.

The famous legend of Jack-o’-lantern influenced one of the most famous symbols of the American Halloween, the pumpkins. In Ireland, people used turnips or other vegetables to carve; however, in American they found abundant were easier to carve. In this way, they continued with the tradition, but with new vegetables.

A method of driving away evil spirits in Irish culture was to carve scary face onto turnips or potatoes. This occurred to a man called Stingy Jack in the Irish legend. The legend that originated the habit of using pumpkins in American Halloween. Jack was a drunk man. According to Irish folklore, Jack invited the devil to drink, but he did not want to pay for the drink, thus he convinced the devil to transform himself into a coin, in order to pay the bill. The devil made it, but Jack kept



the coin in his pocket next to a silver cross, because next to the cross, the evil one could not return to his original form.

After that, Jack freed the Devil with a condition that he would not bother him for one year and if he died, the Devil would not want his soul. Next year Jack tricked him and made him climb a tree to pick up a piece of fruit. When he was on the tree, Jack carved the sign of the cross in the bark of the tree. By the way, the devil could not climb down the tree until he promised not to bother Jack for ten years. This scary tree also exists in the “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”. According to Irving (2019):

As Ichabod approached this fearful tree, he began to whistle: he thought his whistle was answered – it was but a blast sweeping sharply through the dry branches. As he approached a little nearer, he thought he saw something white, hanging in the midst of the tree – he paused and ceased whistling; but on looking more narrowly, perceived that it was a place where the tree had been scathed by lightning, and the white wood laid bare. (IRVING, 2019, p. 24).

After that, Jack died, but God could not accept him in heaven and the devil, although was angry with him, kept his word and did not want Jack in hell either. However, he sent the ghost of Jack to a dark night with a burning charcoal to light the way. Jack put the charcoal into a carved turnip and Jack has been wandering over the Earth ever since. The Irish Jack incarnates the archetype of the trickster, a character we find in many and different cultural and mythological traditions all over the world.

Since this legend arrived in the USA with the immigrants, it was observed that in the new world, vegetables like turnips and potatoes were not in huge amount like in Ireland. However, the new land was rich in pumpkins. According to Hussain (2002, p. 8): “In Ireland, they also used turnips for their “Jack Lanterns”, but upon arriving in the new world, they discovered that pumpkins were abundant and easier to carve out.” The facility in carving pumpkins and the huge amount of the vegetable made people adapt their beliefs. According to Bell (1994):

A familiar sight on Halloween in America is the Jack-o'-lantern, a hollowed-out pumpkin with a carved face illuminated from within by a candle. But in Europe, where pumpkins and squash were not native, other kinds of oversized fruits and vegetables have been used. (BELL, 1994, p. 8)

By this way, a new version of the story was created. We can observe the use of the pumpkin in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (2019)” in the following excerpt:

In one part of the road leading to the church was found the saddle trampled in the dirt; the tracks of horses' hoofs deeply dented in the road, and evidently at furious speed, were traced to the bridge, beyond which, on the bank of a broad part of the brook, where the water ran deep and black, was found the hat of the unfortunate Ichabod, and close beside it a shattered pumpkin... (IRVING, 2019, p. 27).

In this work, the pumpkin is associated with the head of the headless horseman, which was flung towards Ichabod Crane. In the excerpt, we can observe that the pumpkin may have been used by Brom to drive Ichabod away from Katrina. Every time the story was told, Brom laughed. In fact, he managed to scare Ichabod away, so that he was never seen in the village again. According to Irving (2019, p. 28):

“wherever the story of Ichabod was related, [Brom] always burst into a hearty laugh at the mention of the pumpkin; which led some to suspect that he knew more about the matter than he chose to tell”.

In the next section, we will discuss about the Dullahan. Another Irish tale that had great contribution to the emergence of the stories of American Halloween that we know nowadays.

#### 4. THE IRISH LEGEND OF THE DULLAHAN

In this section, we will discuss about the Irish legend of the Dullahan. It is a tale of the Irish folklore very similar with “The legend of Sleepy Hollow”. Dullahan means ‘headless’ in Gaelic.

The legend of the Dullahan also arrived with the coming of the Irish people to the new territory. Ireland was a country full of tales and folklore and some of them traveled with their people in the process of the migration to America. According to Harris (2017, p. 10): “With the arrivals of Irish immigrants and their stories, The Dullahan appeared in American folklore during the 1700s and 1800s.”

The Dullahan is a headless horseman who walks about on a black horse. The Dullahan carries his head in one of his hands. As his head is bright, the horseman uses it to light the path through the remote roads of the Irish countryside. He has a supernatural vision when he lifts his severed head, he can see what he wants for longer, even on the darkest nights. Thus, he can spy a house of someone who is close to die. In “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” there is also a headless horseman and he haunts the valley and the adjacent roads. According to Irving (2019, p. 2): “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.”

There are some versions of this legend. Some of them presents The Dullahan using a buggy in his horse. Harris (2017, p. 10): tells us that: “Sightings of the Dullahan vary from person to person, but recurring characteristics include a black carriage drawn by black horses, that is driven by a dark coachman wielding a whip, and the creature appears close to midnight.” In the legend of the Dullahan, the headless horseman appears close to midnight and in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”, the creature appears also in a moment of darkness. According to Irving (2019):

the ghost rides forth to the scene of battle in nightly quest of his head; and that the rushing speed with which he sometimes passes along the Hollow, like a midnight blast, is owing to his being belated, and in a hurry to get back to the church-yard before daybreak. (IRVING, 2019, p. 3)

Some say that the buggy is made by human body. However, the legend says that if The Dullahan stops walking someone will die. He calls a person by her name and the person dies. According to Lessing (2018): “A drive-by splattering, however, was better than the rider stopping in his path. Should a Dullahan ease his horse, the moment the beast halted would be the same moment a man would die.” This moment of the legend may have influenced the moment that Ichabod Crane was not found after his encounter with the headless horseman. In the short story, it is not known for sure about Ichabod’s disappearance. According to Irving (2019, p. 28): “The old country wives, however, who are the best judges of these matters, maintain to this day that Ichabod was spirited away by supernatural means”.

There is no way to stop The Dullahan, because every gate opens when he is close. Only gold has the power to put way the horseman. If he sees something made of gold, he leaves temporarily. He does not like when someone looks to him, however if someone does it, he throws a bucket of blood on the head of the person. The people can hear the Dullahan, but they do not can see it. In the next section, we will discuss about The Flying Dutchman, a tale of the Dutch folklore.

## **5. THE DUTCH LEGEND OF THE FLYING DUTCHMAN**

In this section, we will discuss about The Flying Dutchman. It is a legend that is in the people imagination. The legend tells us a story of a sea captain who dove into a storm to be a hero in his homeland. However, Mambra (2021) tells us that the legend: "Originated in the 17<sup>th</sup>- century, there are a number of stories around the myth of the Flying Dutchman, some point to a cursed vessel, while a few suggest the Dutchman refers to the captain of the ship, who was destined not to make land despite all his effort."

The sailor known as Hendrick Van Der Decken was on his way to Amsterdam from the East Indies. He carried silks, spices and dyes on his ship. He believed that this reward would bring him fame and fortune back in Holland. As the ship passed the Cape of Good Hope, it got caught in a massive storm. The crew asked the captain to return to the shore and wait for the storm to pass, but he refused.

As the Captain wanted to be a hero in his homeland, he followed his destiny, but the storm increased and he and his crew suffered a shipwreck. Due to what happened, the captain was condemned for betraying his crew, for which reason their spirits were not allowed to return to shore and were condemned to sail the seven seas forever. According to Dale (1991):

The Flying Dutchman is a mythic figure who is condemned to roam the world, never resting, never bringing his ship to port, until Judgment Day. Cursed by past crimes, he is forbidden to land and sails from sea to sea, seeking a peace which forever eludes him. (DALE, 1991, p. 359).

The Flying Dutchman was condemned to roam the world, because he betrayed his crew and the headless horseman from Sleepy Hollow roamed by night looking for his head. According Irving (2019, p. 3): "the ghost rides forth to the scene of battle in nightly quest of his head". Likewise, the Flying Dutchman roamed in the seas that was the scene of the shipwreck. The captain and his crew suffered a shipwreck when he wanted to be hero in his homeland and the headless horseman lost his head during the revolutionary war in which he acted as a mercenary fighting for the British crown. However, all died and their spirits did not rest in peace.

This legend was an example to others captains and crew. People reflected a lot before to sail in a stormy sea. Some says that they saw the ghost ship. Next section we will talk about the legend of Rubezahl.

## **6. THE GERMAN LEGEND OF RÜBEZAHL**

In this section, we will discuss about the German legend of the Rubezahl. One version of this legend tells us that a glazier was travelling between the mountains. He was pretty tired, because he was carrying a heavy load of glass. He was looking for a place to rest. Rubezahl was observing it and turned into a little mound. When the

glazier saw the mound, he sat on it. When he sat the mound disappeared and the glazier fell and broke the glass.

The glazier was pretty sad but he followed his own way. However, Rübezahl became a traveler and talked to him. He asked the reason of the sadness of the glazier. Rübezahl told him the truth about what he did to him. He said he would be rewarded because of that. The losses of the glazier would be made good to him.

Therefore, Rübezahl turned into a donkey and asked the glazier to sell him. The glazier managed to sell it for 9 dollars to the miller. The miller took the animal to the stable and the boy who took care of it put hay for it to eat. Rübezahl replied that he did not eat hay. The boy was frightened and told the miller what had happened. The miller went to the stable to see what had happened, but the donkey was gone. In this way, Rübezahl took revenge on the miller, who had deceived many poor people. According to Nehra<sup>5</sup> (2020): “In the legends, Rübezahl appears as giant, gnome or mountain spirit. He is known to be incredibly unpredictable; capable of helping people but also of exacting terrible revenge on those who he perceives to have wronged him.” In other versions, we can also observe that Rübezahl is tricking people. The version of the four musicians travelling between the mountains that encounter a man and a horse shows us this. According to Great Lakes Escape Game<sup>6</sup> (2022):

At the end of the night, as they tally up their earnings for the day, the musicians jokingly insist that the one piece of horse manure be included in the day's proceeds. When the musician unwraps the manure, he notices it is quite heavy. He scrapes it with his knife and discovers it is actually a brick of pure gold. The musicians run back to where they encountered the man and his horse, but the rest of the manure is gone.

There is this kind of joke in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”. We can observe it when Brom is tricking Ichabod Crane to get Katrina Van Tassel. According to Irving (2019):

There was something extremely provoking in this obstinately pacific system; it left Brom no alternative but to draw upon the funds of rustic waggery in his disposition, and to play off boorish practical jokes upon his rival. Ichabod became the object of whimsical persecution to Bones, and his gang of rough riders. They harried his hitherto peaceful domains; smoked out his singing school, by stopping up the chimney; broke into the school-house at night, in spite of its formidable fastenings of white and window stakes, and turned every thing topsy-turvy: so that the poor schoolmaster began to think all the witches in the country held their meeting there. (IRVING, 2019, p. 14).

In addition to this tricking both in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and the legend of Rübezahl, we can observe that in the version of the four musicians in the legend of Rübezahl there is other common point when people are looking for Ichabod. According to Irving (2019):

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<sup>5</sup> In: I AM EXPAT. **German Folklore: Rübezahl**. Available at: <https://fairytalez.com/the-legend-of-rubezahl-or-number-nip/>. Accessed on: August 14, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> In: Great Lakes Escape Games. **The Legend of Rübezahl**. Available at: <https://greatlakesescapegame.com/legend/>. Accessed on: August 14, 2022.

An inquiry was set on foot, and after diligent investigation, they came upon his traces. In one part of the road leading to the church was found the saddle trampled in the dirt; the tracks of horses' hoofs deeply dented in the road, and evidently at furious speed, were traced to the bridge, beyond which, on the bank of a broad part of the brook, where the water ran deep and black, was found the hat of the unfortunate Ichabod, and close beside it a shattered pumpkin. (IRVING, 2019, p. 27).

There are some versions of the legend of Rübezahl. However, the version that explain the origin of his name is the most famous. In this version, Rübezahl kidnaps a Polish princess in order to marry her. In this way, Rübezahl tells her, he will recreate the members of the court from the turnips he was growing. Therefore, he started to count the turnips. At this moment, she runs away. This is the reason that he is known by the insulting nickname Rübezahl (from "Rübe" and "zahlen", respectively "turnip" and "to count or number" in German). Almost the same happens in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow", because Ichabod fell in love with Katrina. She was not a princess; however, she was daughter of a rich man. According to Irving (2019, p. 8): "Among the musical disciples who assembled, one evening in each week, to receive his instructions in psalmody, was Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter and only child of a substantial Dutch farmer." At the end of the story, Ichabod does not stay together with Katrina. In the next section, we will discuss about the life of Washington Irving and about "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow".

## 7. THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW BY WASHINGTON IRVING

This section will present some aspects of the life and works of Washington Irving and a small summary of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" in order to help us to understand the influence of the American Halloween in the text of the novella, as well as the influence of the European legends in the American culture and literature.

Washington Irving was born in New York on April 3, 1783. When the American Revolution was ending. He was a writer, historian, biographer, essayist, and a diplomat. He was known as the first American man of letters and as the father of the American short story. His stories won international recognition. Irving was also known by the alias of Dietrich Knickerbocker, Jonathan Oldstyle, and Geoffrey Crayon. According to Zhao (2016, p. 1958):

Irving's contribution to American literature is unique in more than one way. He was the first American writer of imaginative literature to gain international fame. Irving gave his works distinctive American flavor, "Rip Van Winkle" or "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow", however exotic these stories are among the treasures of the American language and culture. These two stories easily trigger off American imagination with their focus on American subjects, American landscape, and, in Irving's case, the legends of the Hudson River region of America. It is not the sketches about Europe but the tales about America that made Washington Irving a household word and his fame enduring. He was father of American short stories. Though most of Irving's subject matter are borrowed heavily from European sources, which are chiefly Germanic, and his writings were greatly influenced by European literature, Irving's relationship with Europe in terms of his literary imagination can hardly be ignored considering his success both abroad and at home.

Irving was son of William Irving, a Scottish-American merchant, of Sarah Sanders, daughter of an English clergyman. The most famous works of Washington

Irving are “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”. These works are considered the first examples of the short story genre, they are gothic and humorous. “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” was written while Irving was living in England. The short story was published in a book called *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* In the USA, the *Sketch Book* was published in installments in 1819 and the section that included the short story was published in 1820.

Sleepy Hollow is a village that descends from the original Dutch settlers. The place remains under a kind of enchantment, which makes the residents prone to all kinds of wonderful beliefs, subject to trances, mirages, many local stories and superstitions. According to Irving (2019, p. 2): “A drowsy, dream influence seems to hang over the land and to pervade the very atmosphere... The place still continues under the sway of some witching power. In this place there is a spirit of a Hessian soldier that haunts it”. The soldier had his head decapitated by a cannonball during the War of Independence. According to Irving (2019, p. 2): “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.”

Ichabod Crane arrived to live in this village, a strange-looking man, but whose intention was to educate the local children. He was very fond of fantastic stories. According to Irving (2019, p. 6), Ichabod: “was a perfect master of Cotton Mather’s history of New England Witchcraft, in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed”. He begins to fall in love with Katrina Van Tassel, the only child of a Dutch farmer. He really wanted to win Katrina, but the girl had another suitor. Brom Bones was the opposite of Ichabod; Brom was the hero of the region.

Brom and his friends pursued Ichabod quite a bit and even went so far as to ridicule Ichabod in front of Katrina. However, one day, Ichabod was invited to a party at Van Tassel's house. To go to the party he borrowed a horse from farmer Hans Van Ripper. Ichabod had a great time at the party and danced a lot. After dancing, he joined a group of people talking about ancient times and ghost stories. According to Irving (2019, p. 20): “When the dance was at an end, Ichabod was attracted to a knot of the sager folks, with old Van Tassel, sat smoking at one end of the piazza, gossiping over former times, and drawing out long stories about war”. It was in these conversations that the legend of the headless horseman was told.

When the party was over, Ichabod stayed a while longer to chat with Katrina. He left very late. On the way, he remembered the stories he had heard, as he was passing through the scene of many stories. Ichabod heard some noises and then he was chased by the headless horseman.

Ichabod tried to run away from the headless horseman, but he threw his head at Ichabod. The other day, the horse Ichabod borrowed was found, but Ichabod remained missing. Therefore, they started looking for Ichabod. Soon they found the horse's saddle, Ichabod's hat, and beside it a torn pumpkin. As Ichabod lived alone, they soon stopped talking about him. Another teacher replaced him.

Later, a farmer in New York said that Ichabod was alive and that he left the village for fear of the headless horseman. Some think Bones did something to Ichabod, but some women say he was taken by supernatural means.

## 8. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When we began this research, we had the curiosity to know better the life of Washington Irving and his works and the passion for American culture. This was the

reason why we researched about the European influence in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and the origins of the American Halloween.

That said, our research had as general objective find elements of the European culture present in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (2019) and relate them with their countries of origin. It appears that the general objective was achieved, as the research was able to verify that the European legends analyzed have similarities with the short story by Washington Irving.

The initial specific objective was to discuss about the roots of the Halloween. It was achieved, because we found many theories about the origins of the Halloween. Since the pagan Samhain festival in Europe until the American version of the Halloween which was taken to the USA by the new inhabitants of the country.

The last specific objective was to understand how Irish, Dutch and German culture have influenced and are present in the American version of Halloween. It was achieved, because we can observe in the writing of Washington Irving similarities with European folklore. In addition, we considered “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” part of American Halloween, because we can observe some traits of American Halloween in the work.

The research started from the hypothesis that “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” was heavily influenced by Irish folklore, as the arrival of Irish immigrants in the USA occurred at the same time as the writing of Irving's work in the 19th century, because there was evidence which led us to believe so. During the course of the research, it was discovered that not only Irish people, but also other immigrants of other European countries influenced “The legend of Sleepy Hollow” through the folklore of their countries of origin present in the short story.

The methodology we used to carry out the research was the bibliographic research where we search in books and on sites of the internet theories about the historical roots of the Halloween until the nowadays American Halloween and legends of the European folklore that probably were present in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”.

Is possible to research in the future about English legends that influenced “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”, because during its writing, Washington Irving was living in England. It is also possible to research about Scotland, as the author begins the short story with verses from the poem “Castle of Indolence” by James Thomson, a Scottish poet.

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