

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Humans are always interested in stories which tell about how the world will end, whether it is from myths, religions, or simply fictions. Those stories usually begin with chaos, war, or major catastrophes which engulf the world.

Those things are the prelude of the end of the world itself. It will ultimately end with total destruction and annihilation of all beings and how the new world (or sometimes heaven) replaces the world. Almost all cultures or beliefs have this kind of story; but there are some cultures which do not believe it, such as Egyptian or Japanese cultures, because they think that world or life and death is a never ending cycle. However, religions and cultures that do believe that the world will end have a strange similarity in the depiction of how the world will end, although there are some which are different and contrasting with each other.

Maria Manuel Lisboa (2011) stated that people all over the world are mostly afraid of world ending or *Apocalypse*, just like they are afraid of darkness. She said that these fears recur in every different culture, crossing different boundaries of time and space even though the stories are told in different expressions. We cannot deny the fact that *Apocalypse* story will always be popular from time to time; this is proven by the presence of many literatures, novels, paintings, and also movies that explores this story. To give further proof, the movie *2012* will be a

good example to show credibility of the statement since it is a recent and popular movie.

The movie *2012* tells about the major catastrophe that will happen in December 2012 and it is based on Mayan premonition in their calendar. The fact that this movie was one of the best selling movies all over the world when it was released only concurs the fact that people are interested and allured to the scenarios how the world ends. Among all the scenarios, the stories that are probably most intriguing to people are *Ragnarok* from the Norse Mythology and *Apocalypse* based on the *Holy Bible* believed by Christians.

*Ragnarok* is a term from Norse language which literally means Doom of the Gods (Dronke, 1997). The word *Ragnarok* comes from the *Voluspa*, an ancient poem of Vikings. *Voluspa* or a *Seeress' Prophecy* began with the chatting of a dead prophetess and the god Odin. She began by rechanting the creation of the cosmos in the beginning of time, describing the triumphant win of gods against the giants. As time went, her words became more difficult to understand as she told of an impending future, the doom of the gods. The event where the war between good and evil would erupt resulting in the destruction of all is called *Ragnarok*. Norse people believe that the seeds of this event were sown from the very beginning when the world was created at the first time. The first creature emerged was from mixture of extreme fire and ice, therefore the universe was fragile and unstable. The Norse believes that *Ragnarok* is inevitable.

Before *Ragnarok* occurred, the earth would experience *Fimbulvetr*, or the three consecutive destructive winters that would demoralize all people hearts and

made them conflicting with each other. The two legendary beasts, Skoll and Hati, would consume the sun and the moon, resulting in the total darkness on the surface of the earth. Then three cocks would crow calling the gods, the giants and the dead. This signaled that the war would soon occur between the gods and the giants. After the war ended where almost all living things died, there would be a new earth rising from the bottom of the oceans, green and fertile as ever. The children of the gods would return to rule this new world. This story, however, has a strange affinity to the *Apocalypse* story written in the *Book of Revelation* in the Holy Bible of Christianity.

Even though the Bible is a religious book, it is also a literary work; in fact, the Bible is one of the literary masterpieces (Lewis, 1958). Despite the fact that the *Apocalypse* is indeed a religious concept, it cannot be denied that *Apocalypse* is a story, and thus, a literary work. This study will solely treat the Bible as a work of art and will focus on its literary aspect rather than its religious values. The version that will be used in this study is the King James Version. According to Vance (1993), it was publicly issued in 1611 and underwent several revisions. The King James Version later will be known as the Authorized Version and translated into many different languages. The reasons why the King James Version are used as the material in this study is that this version is the most widely used version in the world for this version has been around for four hundred years. Many of the later versions are derived from the King James Version indicating that this version is of majestic qualities.

*The Book of Revelation* in the *Holy Bible of Christianity* was written by Apostle John. It was written in the Book that he was “*in the spirit*” when he heard voice telling him to write down what the voice was about to tell him and sent it to seven churches. In chapters 4 and 5 of the *Book of Revelation*, John wrote that he was taken into heaven and placed on to a place where he could see the events soon to happen in the Earth. John then was given a three visions or judgments. Each of them contained seven sections. The first vision was about the seven seals fastened to a scroll that contained judgments which were about to fall into the face of the Earth. The second vision was about the blowing of seven trumpets; and by the sound of each trumpet, events happened on earth. The third vision told about the seven bowls of God’s wrath. Those three visions would be followed by the destruction of Babylon and a Thousand Years where Satan and his followers were imprisoned. After a Thousand Years, Satan was released and waged war against the people of God. Then Final Battle between the Good and Evil would occur, and the Good would triumph and the Evil would be casted into a lake of fire. And there would be a new heaven and earth where there was no more suffering or death.

The two scenarios from Norse myths and Christianity strangely have similar traits and events in them, although not all. It is interesting to explore them deeper using the method of comparative literature. Comparative Literature is an interdisciplinary field where the study goes across borders such as nationality, era, genres, forms, disciplines (Stallknecht & Frenz, 1961). In a hind sight, comparative literature can somewhat be called literary study without borders.

Practitioners may compare for example a medieval epic story with popular novels, or Greek myths with Shakespeare's plays. It is true that *Voluspa* and *Book of Revelation* are of different genre; while *Voluspa* is an epic poem from Norse myth, *Book of Revelation* is an eschatological literature whereas eschatology is literary works that concern about the End Days. However, the part from *Voluspa* which tells about *Ragnarok* in the latter part of the poem is indeed an eschatological work. To further enhance the connectivity between these two works, the universality of archetypes will be useful in linking these works. The usage of archetypes will certify that this research will not be too broad but instead definite and focused. This research will be focusing on similarities and differences in the *Voluspa* and *Book of Revelations* regarding of how they tell the stories with archetypes as the tool to scrutinize *Ragnarok* and *Apocalypse*.

Archetypes are universal symbols that recur again and again in different cultures, places, and times. These archetypes tend to serve common meaning even though the cultures are so far away in place and time with each other with no possibility of those cultures can have any connections at all. In the book *Man and His Symbols*, Carl Gustav Jung (1964) notes that "But at the same time, they also manifest themselves in fantasies and often reveal their presence only by symbolic images. These manifestations are what I called archetypes. They are without known origin; and they reproduce themselves in any time or in any part of the world."(p. 58). Jung explored these archetypes in order to analyze psychological aspects of human beings; as he used them to interpret dreams. Northrop Frye then

developed these remarks to analyze literature as he wrote on *Anatomy of Criticism*.

## 1.2 Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study, the research problem is stated as follow:

How do the Norse *Ragnarok* and Christianity *Apocalypse* correspond with each other in the terms of archetypal motif and characters?

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

Related to the problems of the study above, the objective of the study is as follow:

To find out the correspondence of Norse *Ragnarok* and Christianity *Apocalypse*, either similarities or differences, regarding the archetypal motifs and characters.

