

THE SHORT FICTION OF
WASHINGTON IRVING

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
JILL WILSON COHN
1971



This is to certify that the
thesis entitled

THE SHORT FICTION OF
WASHINGTON IRVING

presented by

Jill Wilson Cohn

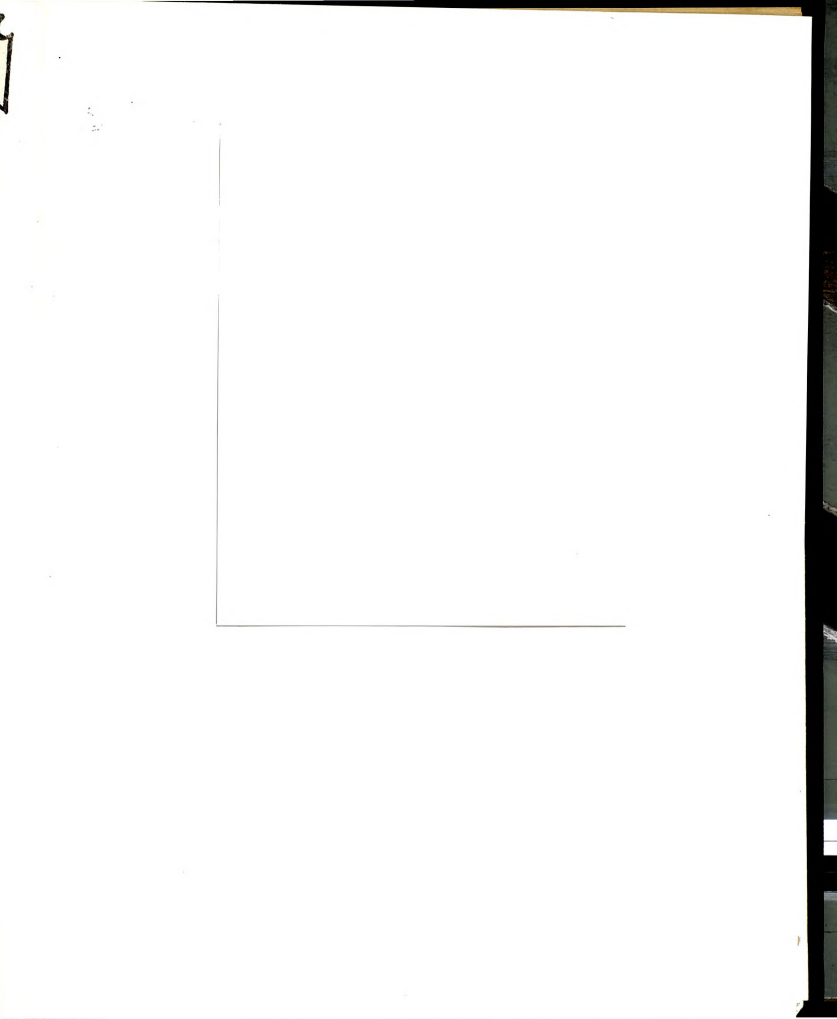
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Date July, 1971





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ABSTRACT

THE SHORT FICTION OF WASHINGTON IRVING

By

Jill Wilson Cohn

This study examines the forms of fiction which comprise the four major volumes of Irving's short works: The Sketch Book, Bracebridge Hall, Tales of a Traveller, and The Alhambra. Since there is so little pattern to his development as a writer of short fiction, the dissertation is not organized by volume, but rather by form: the sketch, the tale, the short story, and the framing story. It is the balance and integration of the fictional elements--particularly the function of the narrator--which distinguish these forms as Irving practiced them.

An Irving sketch, such as "The Wife," "Westminster Abbey," or "The Stout Gentleman," has for its primary focus a descriptive picture of life as seen by the narrator. It may or may not involve some action or some characterization. It centers, however, on the narrator's observation of the external world and that world at times may be static and at other times may involve



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action or apparent conflict. But the conflict is seldom fully developed, the tension, if any, never matures, nor is there a genuine resolution. The characters seldom are developed or well-rounded, and the integration of character and plot is incomplete. The focus of the sketches is divided between the narrator and the ostensible topic of the selection.

An Irving tale is a hybrid form between a sketch and a short story. Tales such as "Annette Delarbre," "The Student of Salamanca," and "Legend of the Arabian Astrologer," might be viewed as unsuccessful short stories. Unlike the sketch, many of the tales are told by a narrator other than Crayon--a narrator who is usually physically present in the tale. Like the sketch, the characters are often one-dimensional, and the action frequently is not dramatized. Like the short story, the tale has a plot, characters, setting, conflict, tension, and resolution--but usually these elements are not functionally integrated. Many of the tales are too long for optimum effect, and lack sufficient dramatic focus. The "The Devil and Tom Walker," however, is a tale that nearly becomes a short story.

Only three of Irving's works can be classified as fully realized short stories: "Spectre Bridegroom," "Rip Van Winkle," and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." They are characterized by a skillful integration of

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fictional elements, neatly balanced to produce a unified effect on the reader. None of these stories is narrated by Crayon and none has a narrator physically present in the plot. In these stories Irving was not torn between the events and the narrator's personal reaction to those events. Instead he is able to concentrate on shaping the elements of the story.

The framing story is a unique form which combines short stories, tales, or sketches, one enclosing the other in the fashion of a Chinese box. It is the most complex form Irving practiced. Irving began using it in a loose fashion, often simply having one narrator introduce another narrator who tells a story. Sometimes there is little attempt to functionally integrate the introductory and concluding materials with the internal tales. But in "Dolph Heyliger" and "Strange Stories" Irving demonstrates his ability to structurally and thematically integrate stories or tales so that one tale complements and illuminates the others.

It is possible to discern some pattern in Irving's practice of these four forms. The three short stories are included in the first volume, The Sketch Book. By the end of Bracebridge Hall, however, Irving demonstrates his skill in handling the framing story of "Dolph Heyliger." The complex form must have intrigued him, for each of the four parts of Tales of a Traveller is based

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on the structure of a framing story. This trend toward more complex forms ends, however, with Tales of a Traveler. The book was not well-received by the critics. In his next collection, The Alhambra, Irving devotes less attention to the structural unity of the legends. The selections are loosely connected and often poorly constructed. After the publication of The Alhambra in 1832, Irving gave most of his energy to longer non-fiction works. Though he wrote some short fiction after 1832, these later pieces do not demonstrate any further structural development.



THE SHORT FICTION OF
WASHINGTON IRVING

By

Jill Wilson Cohn

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

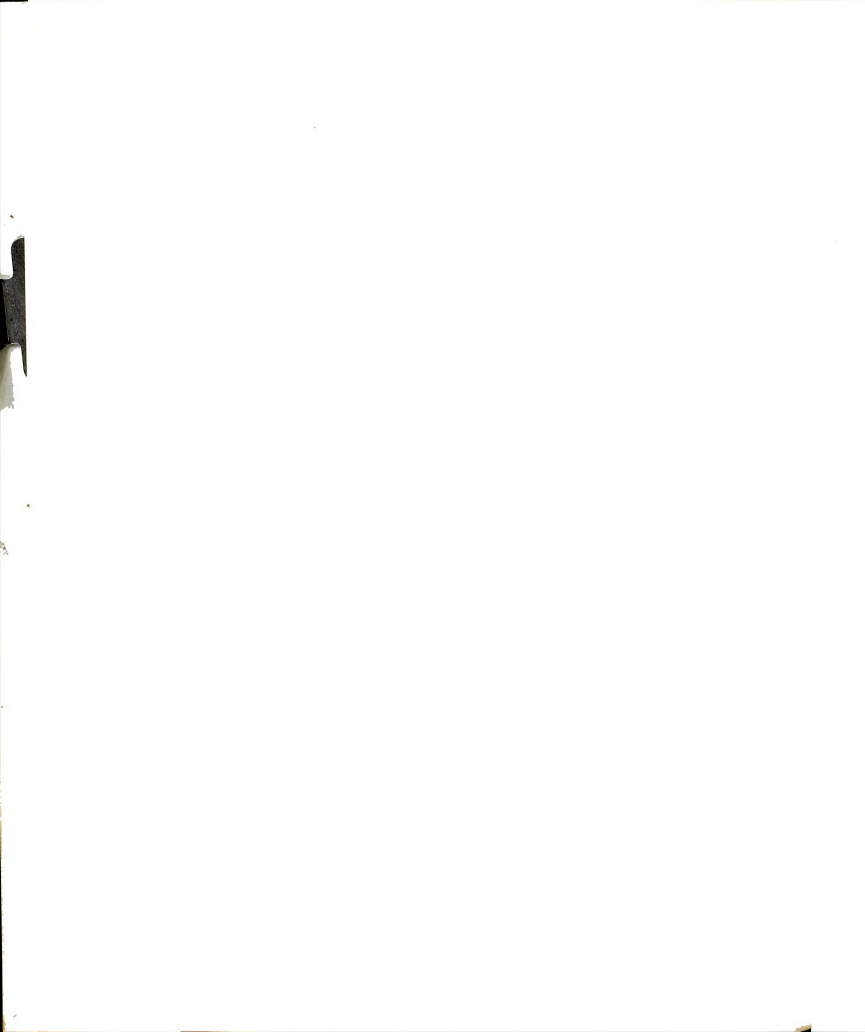
Department of English

1971



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to Kim C

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Professor James Pickering who first suggested this study and gave me helpful advice and encouragement. I wish also to thank Professor Russel Nye for his consideration, encouragement, and support. My thanks also extends to Professor Linda Wagner who offered many helpful suggestions.

Finally, I wish to add a special note of thanks to Kim Cohn who encouraged me to continue my education.

PREFACE .

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PREFACE

Washington Irving was one of the most widely read American authors of his time. His short fiction undoubtedly had an influence on the writers and writing which followed him, particularly on the development of the American short story. Irving scholars have devoted considerable attention to his biography, to his relationship to his cultural environment, to the thematic concerns of his work, and to the sources of his fiction. Since so little attention has been given to the inherent technical qualities of his work, the intent of this dissertation is to examine the formal structure of Irving's short fiction. Until this is done, it is perhaps impossible to fully understand how these early writings may or may not have influenced later writers.

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INTRODUCTION

Washington Irving (1783-1859) was one of the first American writers to achieve international recognition. He began as a satirical essayist in the tradition of Addison and Steele. His Jonathan Oldstyle, Salmagundi, and Knickerbocker History of New York are all in the eighteenth century satirical tradition. His next major publication--written under the pseudonym of Geoffrey Crayon--was The Sketch Book, a collection of stories, tales, sketches, and essays. Both Knickerbocker (1809) and The Sketch Book (1819-1820) received loud critical acclaim, a major achievement for Irving, considering the significant differences in the style and form of the two books. The period between 1809 and 1819 has been called a fallow decade in Irving's life.¹ He published nothing and the period defines a considerable change in his writing. On the one side lies the 18th century: Salmagundi, Oldstyle, and Knickerbocker, while on the other side lies The Sketch Book, followed by Bracebridge Hall, Tales of a Traveller,

¹Fred Lewis Pattee, The Development of the American Short Story (New York: Harper, 1923), p. 7.

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and later The Alhambra, all representative, in part, of 19th century romanticism.² The change in his writing is perhaps a predictable response to the changing age in which he lived. As Russel Nye in The Cultural Life of a Nation points out:

The period 1776-1830 in America is a period of contradictions, a period in which there were two (or more) sides to every intellectual argument, a period of transition and change in which old and new answers to major questions might exist side by side. It was, intellectually speaking, more or less in balance--the afterglow of the Enlightenment still shining, the dawn of Romanticism just breaking. Eighteen-century patterns of belief still persisted, yet at the same time those patterns were being challenged, changed, and eventually broken. Ideas once firmly nailed down were working loose.³

Irving's move toward romanticism is evident in his increasing interest in myths, legends, supernatural influences, and the magic of the past. According to Robert Spiller, Irving's readings introduced him to "the stream of melancholy which was the first phase of the romantic movement in Germany and England."⁴ The past Irving sought first, however, was not in Germany or Italy, but in England.

²Ibid.

³Russel B. Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation (New York: Harper, 1960), p. 9.

⁴Robert E. Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature (New York: The Free Press, 1955), p. 26.

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Irving was caught up in the current, but the romantic past to which he fled was something the British writers could not recognize because it was so familiar--the past of England itself, a past that never was, with synthetic country houses and squires, story-book rural customs, ancient abbeys, and country churchyards. Suddenly the commonplace present was shrouded in the same melancholy mist that gives glamour to far-away places. The smells and sights and voices of Old England were all about, made suddenly vivid by this appreciative American. (Spiller, p. 26)

Irving's European visits were not restricted to England, however; he also travelled on the continent. During his three journeys, he spent a total of 23 years abroad. The second visit--if it can be called that--lasted 17 years (1815-1832). It was during this European venture that Irving wrote the four volumes discussed in this dissertation. That Irving is an American writing in Europe introduces another interesting contrast in his short fiction. On the one hand, he is an American writer seeking American materials. Yet he spent much of his life in Europe writing about Britain, Germany, and Spain. Though he is the first American writer to receive international recognition, none of the collections studied in this dissertation can be considered exclusively American.

Yet out of these apparent contrasts or contradictions in his works emerges Irving's uniqueness as a writer. Darrel Abel suggests that Irving, like many

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writers, contrasted ideas in such a way as to create his own unique internal tension, a tension which produces the dynamic of his art.

In Irving's work the major term of the contrast was "the accumulated treasures of age" represented by Europe; the minor but still indispensable term was the "youthful promise" of his native country. Although Irving's orientation was more toward "shadowy grandeurs" than toward "commonplace realities," his real subject was their encounter, the moment of disappearance of the grandeurs into the commonplace. His literary method was to combine something old and something new, something borrowed, something blue. The blue was the tint of the blue distance, the sentimental haze which hung over the region where the generalized background of reality melted into the indistinct foreground of fantasy. For Irving too, wrote of a frontier--between the here and now and the faraway and long ago. Both in time and place he pictured this borderland between the natural and supernatural, the old and new, the fact and the idea. Nebulosity was his element. But his interest in this middle distance was not in trying to penetrate it and make out its very nature--but in keeping his distance from it and relishing its mystery.⁵

This mixture of old and new is apparent not only in the themes and topics of Irving's work, but also in the forms he uses. Sometimes he relies on relatively traditional forms such as the essay or sketch. Other times his sketches and tales verge on becoming that uniquely American form--the short story. Once in a while, as in "Rip Van Winkle," Irving creates a well-conceived, carefully structured short story--no minor

⁵ Darrel Abel, American Literature: Colonial and Early National Writing, Vol. 1 (Woodbury, New York: Barron's, 1963), pp. 329-30.

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achievement, and an achievement which prompts us to more closely examine his other short fiction.

Of course, tales and stories have been told since the dawn of history, but the short story as a form is relatively young. It is the literary form which has been shaped and developed primarily by American writers. Very little has been written on the development of the American short story, but most critics agree that it "begins with Washington Irving."⁶ This study of Irving certainly supports that assertion. Though it is not possible to trace a definite chronological development in Irving's short fiction--it does not evolve neatly from essay to sketch to tale to short story, then to framing story--still, the beginnings of the American short story are evident in his short fiction.

This dissertation examines the forms of fiction which comprise the four major volumes of Irving's short works: The Sketch Book, Bracebridge Hall, Tales of a Traveller, and The Alhambra. Since there is so little pattern to his development as a writer of short fiction, the dissertation is not organized chronologically, but rather by form: the sketch, the tale, the short story, and the framing story. Each of these forms will be discussed later in more detail, but it may be useful here

⁶Pattee, p. 1.

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to briefly mention the distinguishing characteristics of each. These are not intended as comprehensive definitions, but simply definitions which apply to the form as Irving practiced it.

Though the essay is not included in this study, it may be helpful to begin by noting the structure of an Irving essay. Nearly all Irving's writing is personal and his essays are no exception. However, his essays emphasize intellectual ideas or concepts rather than personal experience. Though he may include a story or experience, he uses it only as an example. The narrator's intellectual opinion is the central concern in an essay, and any story or tale which is employed is present only to reinforce the opinion or illustrate the topic in some way.

The forms of the sketch, tale, and short story are not easily defined. One of the most important characteristics which distinguishes these forms, however, is the function of the narrator in each. William Hedges in his study of Washington Irving gives some attention to Irving's sketches.

As yet no one has seriously attempted to define the sketch or explain its relationship to the short story. A typical critic says of the sketch, "differentiating it from the tale," that it depends on "its emphasis upon atmosphere and scene, its subordination of action and adventure." But as a genre developed by Irving and perhaps perfected by Hawthorne, the sketch is surely more than simply a "romantic means of catching the atmosphere of remote



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places." It is fundamentally the expression of a Crayon-like narrator. It consists of brief observations by a narrator speaking (sometimes literally) from an isolated chamber.⁷

Indeed an Irving sketch has for its primary focus a descriptive picture of life as seen by the narrator. It may or may not involve some action or some characterization. It centers, however, on the narrator's observation of the external world and that world at times may be static and at other times may involve action or apparent conflict. But the conflict is seldom fully developed, the tension, if there is any, never matures, nor is there a genuine resolution. The characters seldom are developed or well-rounded. And the integration of character and plot is not complete. In Irving's sketches the essential quality rests with the narrator and his relationship to the external world.

Hedges accurately labels Irving's narrator as the "alienated observer." He maintains that it is Crayon's loneliness which "tends to make his surroundings reflect his own image" (p. 147). He goes on to say:

Picturesqueness also distinguishes the sketch, which is based less on belief in the objective reality of an observed scene than on the associations read into it by a spectator. Although it is visual, exploiting what can be seen and taking as its point of departure a physical setting, the sketch makes no attempt to

⁷William L. Hedges, Washington Irving: An American Study, 1802-1832, The Goucher College Series (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p. 146.

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distinguish sharply between nature or the landscape as a thing in itself and nature as experience molded by the observer's imagination. (Hedges, p. 147)

An Irving tale is a kind of hybrid form between a sketch and a short story, though the tale might best be described as an embryonic or underdeveloped short story. Unlike the sketch, many of the tales are told by a narrator other than Crayon--a narrator who is usually physically removed from the story. Like the sketch, the characters in a tale are often flat or one-dimensional, and the action frequently is not dramatized. Like the short story, the tale has a plot, characters, setting, conflict, tension, resolution--but usually these elements are not functionally integrated. Many of the tales are too long for optimum effect and lack sufficient dramatic focus.

Only a few of Irving's works can be classified as short stories. "Rip Van Winkle," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and "The Spectre Bridegroom" are perhaps his only successful short stories. They are characterized by a skillful integration of fictional elements, all of which are neatly balanced to produce a unified effect on the reader. What is perhaps most significant about these stories is that none of them is narrated by Crayon and in none is the narrator physically present. "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" are both "found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker" and "The Spectre Bridegroom" is narrated by "a corpulent old

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Swiss, who had the look of a veteran traveller."* In these stories, then, Irving was not torn between the events and the narrator's personal reaction to those events. Instead he is able to concentrate on the story itself--and at his best he was able to create what have become classics in American fiction.

The framing story is a unique form which combines short stories, tales, or sketches, one enclosing the other in Chinese box fashion. Irving began using it in a loose fashion, often simply having one narrator introduce another narrator who tells a story. Sometimes there is little attempt to functionally integrate the introductory and concluding materials with the internal story. But at its best as in "Dolph Heyliger," or "Strange Stories," the framing story can structurally and thematically integrate stories or tales so that one story complements and illuminates the others.

Before introducing the four volumes examined in this dissertation, it will be helpful to briefly discuss Irving's literary theory. Irving devoted little time to discussing his theories of writing and he seldom offered specific comments about his own works. There is ample evidence in his writing that he was a skillful craftsman

*This and all subsequent quotations from Irving, unless otherwise noted, are taken from The Works of Washington Irving, New Edition, Revised, 21 Vols. New York: G. P. Putnam, 1860-1861. Citations to the quotations are given parenthetically in the text.

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with language, mood, color, description, and sometimes with characterization. But there is no obvious indication in his work--fiction or journals--that he attempted to evolve a literary theory of form. He never indicates that he is specifically interested in perfecting new or better forms of fiction. In the much quoted passage from his letter to Henry Brevoort, Irving says that he regards a story "merely as a frame on which to stretch my materials." He was, he said, more interested in "the play of thought, and sentiment and language; the weaving in of characters, lightly yet expressively delineated; the familiar and faithful exhibition of scenes in common life; and the half-concealed vein of humor that is often playing through the whole."⁸ He also mentions in that letter that he is concerned with the way a story is told. Irving has been attacked for writing simply for the public--books that would sell--rather than being a devoted craftsman concerned with the intellectual and formal characteristics of his writing. It is true that the conscious craftsmanship of the artist is not evident as often as it might be. In Irving's short fiction it is difficult to distinguish what happens or develops by the conscious control of the author, and what happens unconsciously or by accident. Sometimes one wonders if Irving

⁸Washington Irving, The Letters of Washington Irving to Henry Brevoort, Vol. 2 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), pp. 185-86.

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was aware of the structural weakness of a piece. But in other instances it would be unfair to say that he was not consciously concerned with form. One cannot read the intricate organization of a framing story such as "Dolph Heyliger" or "Strange Stories" and assume that Irving was unaware or unskilled in crafting the structure of his work.

The selections discussed in this dissertation are taken from four volumes of Irving's short fiction which were published between 1819 and 1832. The Sketch Book is the first and most familiar of these. Published in 1819-1820 during Irving's second trip abroad, the collection was an immediate and overwhelming success in America and was accepted at once in England.⁹ Irving was pleased that Coleman gave the book a favorable review in the New York Evening Post (August 3, 1819).¹⁰ But that the English responded favorably was even more rewarding for an American writer. Jeffrey praised The Sketch Book in the Edinburgh Review:

We are now tempted to notice it as a very remarkable publication, and to predict that it will form an era in the literature of the nation to which it belongs.¹¹

⁹Stanley T. Williams, The Life of Washington Irving, Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 190.

¹⁰Letters to Brevoort, 2, pp. 117-18.

¹¹Francis Jeffrey, rev. of Sketch Book, Edinburgh Review, 34 (1820), p. 160.

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Some critics discovered that passages of the collection are virtually translations from the German, but Irving has not been strongly condemned for this. Some modern critics, in fact, are quite generous in dealing with Irving's borrowings. In his discussion of The Sketch Book Stanley Williams maintains that "the point is not that Irving often, as in 'Rip Van Winkle,' copies other writings too exactly, but that, once more, he united ingeniously his reading with his own personal experience" (p. 184). Abel agrees with this opinion and excuses Irving's translations in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow":

So close were some passages . . . to its German original that Irving has been accused of plagiarism. Although technically he may be guilty of this, it is the same way in which the Elizabethans were--he freely and without acknowledgement helped himself to what suited him, but assimilated it to his own distinctive style. (p. 332)

This distinctive style, of course, is the outstanding feature of The Sketch Book. Originality was not Irving's goal as he makes clear in the opening selection of Bracebridge Hall:

I am aware that I often travel over beaten ground, and treat of subjects that have already been discussed by abler pens. Indeed, various authors have been mentioned as my models, to whom I should feel flattered if I thought I bore the slightest resemblance; but in truth I write after no model that I am conscious of, and I write with no idea of imitation or competition. (p. 10)

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Nor does Irving pretend to write about significant topics.

Geoffrey Crayon, in the opening selection of The Sketch Book says that the collection is intended as a tourist's sketches of his travels.

As it is the fashion for modern tourists to travel pencil in hand, and bring home their portfolios filled with sketches, I am disposed to get up a few for the entertainment of my friends. When, however, I look over the hints and memorandums I have taken down for the purpose, my heart almost fails me at finding how my idle humor has led me aside from the great objects studied by every regular traveller who would make a book. I fear I shall give equal disappointment with an unlucky landscape painter, who had travelled on the continent, but, following the bent of his vagrant inclination, had sketched in nooks, and corners, and by-places. His sketch-book was accordingly crowded with cottages, and landscapes, and obscure ruins; but he had neglected to paint St. Peter's, or the Coliseum; the cascade of Terni, or the bay of Naples; and had not a single glacier or volcano in his whole collection. (p. 16)

Thus, in characteristic Crayon fashion, the narrator excuses the lack of significant or weighty topics in his writing.

The arrangement of the selections in The Sketch Book does not follow any overall pattern. The first American edition was published in seven parts. Though the list of selections in each number, as Williams states, does help us "to conjecture concerning the actual dates of composition of various essays" (p. 426), the arrangement of the original numbers do little to distinguish a structure for the later collection. Some selections are structurally or thematically related.

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The Christmas pieces of Number VI, of course, are obviously connected. "The Inn Kitchen" acts as an introduction to "The Spectre Bridegroom." "The Country Church," "The Widow and Her Son," and "A Sunday in London" are thematically linked as are the two selections about Indians which were omitted in the original American edition. But as a volume, The Sketch Book lacks an obvious thematic or structural unity. Spiller maintains that the collection has "no continuity of subject matter, no central purpose, no unity other than that of tone" (p. 26). Williams finds The Sketch Book lacking in form and in consistency.

Test The Sketch Book, as it stands among the sets of English classics. Test it not, as did the first American critics, by single essays or groups of essays, nor, like the first English readers, by the two separate collections, but as one book, the first serious writing of Washington Irving. It will then appear to be a miscellaneous and, especially, an uneven work. As literature, at least a half-dozen essays are worthless; twice that number bear the stigma of mediocrity. With its prolix prefaces and appendices, the book overflows, lacking form, into a delta, with sands of sentiment and pools of quiet thought. In these last Irving is persuasive, but sand predominates. His tone is too varied, ill-sustained. (p. 185)

Despite the lack of a coherent structure as an entire volume, however, it is possible to categorize the individual selections according to their forms. The Sketch Book contains essays, sketches, tales, and short stories. Some selections spill out into more than one category, of course. What is both interesting and

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frustrating to the student of Irving is that here in this early volume of his fiction appear some of his best and some of his worst writings. Except for the framing story, Irving's writing structurally progresses little beyond The Sketch Book. The framing story is not introduced until Bracebridge Hall, but The Sketch Book does contain some of Irving's finest sketches, and the three stories that can most accurately be called short stories. No wonder the critics were eager for the next product of Irving's pen and no wonder he was apprehensive about his ability to fulfill the expectations of his public.

His apprehension is quite clearly articulated in the opening selection of his next collection, Bracebridge Hall (1822). He begins "The Author" by mentioning the favorable reception of The Sketch Book which he says was "far beyond my most sanguine expectations" (p. 1). He attributes much of the success of these collections to the fact that little was expected from an American author.

I would willingly attribute this to their intrinsic merits; but, in spite of the vanity of authorship, I cannot but be sensible that their success has, in a great measure, been owing to a less flattering cause. It has been a matter of marvel, to my European readers, that a man from the wilds of America should express himself in tolerable English. (p. 1)

Perhaps in answer to some of the criticism of The Sketch Book Irving gives Bracebridge Hall more overall unity. Set in rural England, the volume contains a series

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of sketches, tales, and a framing story which are unified by a common setting and plot. Crayon is visiting friends at a country manor house, the same house he visits for the holidays in the Christmas sketches of The Sketch Book. Frank Bracebridge, his Father the Squire, Master Simon, a niece Julia, and her fiance the Captain compose the central family circle at Bracebridge Hall. The unity is maintained in several ways. The impending marriage of Julia and the Captain provides a sketchy but consistent plot, the rural area surrounding the Hall unifies the setting, and there is a consistency in the thematic contrasts: rural life vs. city life; aristocracy vs. the common man, traditional customs vs. modern ways; and a variety of explorations of marriage at different social levels.

Despite Irving's anxiety Bracebridge Hall was well-received, though not so widely acclaimed as The Sketch Book. Jeffrey's comments in the Edinburgh Review indicate that he much enjoyed the volume. Yet he does mention the drawing room gossip about Bracebridge Hall which complained that,

. . . in comparison with The Sketch Book, it is rather monotonous and languid; that there is too little variety of characters for two thick volumes; and that the said few characters come on so often, and stay so long, that the gentlest reader at last detects himself rejoicing at being done with them.¹²

¹²Francis Jeffrey, rev. of Bracebridge Hall, Edinburgh Review, 37 (1822), p. 337.

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Jeffrey continues by saying he disagrees with this opinion. Other reviewers, however, did maintain that Bracebridge Hall was not so good as The Sketch Book.

Modern readers are more impatient with Bracebridge Hall. Stanley Williams calls the collection insipid and maintains that for today's readers Bracebridge Hall is "defunct." Comparing it to the robust Sketch Book, Williams finds Bracebridge Hall filled with a "bloodless assembly of lovers, mistresses, huntsmen, servants, and antiquarians idling in castles and forests" (p. 208). What won fame for Irving, Williams continues, was his style, which was much admired in his day:

That Irving was a master of this obsolete, sweet rhetoric seems today hardly a positive virtue. Such is, however, the difference in the two epochs. To appreciate Irving's reputation in 1822 we must observe that he satisfied the criteria of the circle which rejoiced in the "elegance" of sentence and paragraph. Geoffrey Crayon was a master of a fashionable type of prose. (p. 210)

Composed of essays, sketches, tales, and a framing story Bracebridge Hall is often tedious for the modern reader. Except for a few superior selections such as "The Stout Gentleman" and "Dolph Heyliger," there is little to match the quality of "Westminster Abbey," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," or "Rip Van Winkle." In fact, there are no short stories in Bracebridge Hall and the sketches tend to be mediocre. Yet the volume does contain "Dolph Heyliger," a skillfully crafted framing story which has no counterpart in The Sketch Book. Bracebridge

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Hall as a whole is interesting as a record of Irving's progress as a writer. His use of the narrator is particularly significant. In Bracebridge Hall the movement from sketch to tale to framing story parallels the increasing physical withdrawal of the narrator; indeed at times even his editorial presence is removed from the selection. Crayon's physical, emotional, and philosophical presence is obvious in the sketch "St. Mark's Eve," but Crayon is completely removed from the tales "Annette Delarbre" and "The Student of Salamanca." "Annette" is written by a parson and narrated by Lady Lillycraft and "The Student" is narrated by the Captain who says it was written by one of his friends "Charles Lightly, of the Dragoons" (p. 151). Of course, as in all the framing stories, the presence of Crayon is several times removed in "Dolph Heyliger." Yet despite the flexibility in Irving's use of the narrator, the volume has a structural consistency. Contrary to The Sketch Book, all the selections in Bracebridge Hall, whether or not they are directly narrated by Crayon, are at least structurally integrated into the overall organization of the collection.

The framing device must have intrigued Irving, for the entire organization of his next collection is based on the framing story. Each of the four parts of Tales of a Traveller (1824) is structured as a framing story within

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which there are several selections. Each part has for its foundation a story, a setting, and a group of characters which enclose other stories, settings, and characters. Sometimes the stories, in Chinese box fashion, become three or four times removed from the original narrator.

Of all Irving's collections, Tales of a Traveller was the most unfavorably received, and perhaps the most misunderstood. It was severely criticized for its paucity of German materials, its lack of originality, and its vulgarity. Irving wrote it while he was travelling in Germany and the public expected the volume to be a German Sketch Book. Yet there is little German material in the book and most of it is restricted to Part I. The review in Blackwood's Magazine maintains that "there is nothing German here at all."¹³ The reviewers' comments about Irving's lack of originality and power of mind were most cutting and must have caused Irving considerable pain, especially since The Sketch Book and Bracebridge Hall are full of defensive statements and excuses on these very topics. In America the Gazette maintained that "very few living authors are in such favour with so large a public, as Mr. Irving; but of these few, not one has achieved this success without exhibiting more

¹³ Anonymous review, "Letters of Timothy Tickler, Esq., No. XVIII," Blackwood's Magazine, 16 (Sept., 1824), p. 295.

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power,--a stronger and wider grasp of mind."¹⁴ Blackwood's
was even more severe on Tales of a Traveller.

We hardly know how to speak of this sad affair--when we think of what Irving might have done--without losing our temper. It is bad enough--base enough to steal that, which would make us wealthy for ever: but--like the plundering Arab--to steal rubbish--anything--from anybody--everybody--would indicate a hopeless moral temperament: a standard of self-estimation beneath everything.--No wonder that people have begun to question his originality.¹⁵

The final comments of this review were intended to encourage Irving.

We rejoice in your failure, now, because we believe that it will drive you into a style of original composition, far more worthy of yourself--Go to work. Lose no time. Your foundation, will be the stronger for this uproar. You cannot write a novel; a poem; a love tale; or a tragedy. But you can write another Sketch-Book--worth all that you have ever written: if you will draw only from yourself. (p. 67)

For the contemporary reader the vulgarity was the most upsetting aspect of Tales of a Traveller. Most critics severely attacked the book for its lack of decorum. The comments in the previously cited Blackwood's review were typical:

Irving is greatly to blame--quite unpardonable, for two or three droll indecencies, which everybody, of course, remembers, in these Tales. . . . He knew that any book with his name to it, would be permitted

¹⁴ Anonymous review, Tales of a Traveller, Part I, in The United States Literary Gazette, I, No. 11 (Sept. 15, 1824), p. 161.

¹⁵ Anonymous review, "American Writers, No. IV," Blackwood's Magazine, 17 (Jan., 1825), p. 66.

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by fathers, husbands, brothers, to pass without examination: that it would be read aloud, in family circles, all over our country.--We shall not readily pardon him, therefore, much as we love him, for having written several passages, which are so equivocal, that no woman could bear to read any one of them aloud--. (p. 67)

Modern readers are not disturbed by the books "obscenity" but they find little to praise in the Tales. Abel calls it "a batch of hack-work" (p. 333) and Stanley Williams finds it full of weaknesses:

For, next to his miscellaneous writings, Tales of a Traveller is perhaps the most slovenly of all Irving's books. Each of the four parts has faults unpardonable today. Both the ghost stories and the robber tales, designed for a public in love with German romantics and Gothic prestidigitators, are obsolete, as dead as the fashions which begot them. In Parts I and III we yawn over the machinery of haunted Chateaux, sinister storms, mysterious footsteps, and hidden panels. Spirits sigh in the darkness; portraits wink; furniture dances; and brooding, sensitive heroes woo melancholy maidens--in vain. (p. 274)

What is indeed unfortunate is that so few critics now or then acknowledge the structural achievements of the Tales. The Gazette makes a passing reference to the form, but it is obvious that the complexity of the structure was not recognized.

We like the model of these tales very much. Like "Bracebridge Hall," they consist of distinct stories strung together on a slender narrative that runs almost unperceived through the number, and is of little other use than to introduce and connect the episodes.¹⁶

¹⁶ Anonymous review, Tales of a Traveller, Parts III and IV, in The United States Literary Gazette, I, No. 15 (Nov. 15, 1824), p. 229.

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William Hedges is one of the few modern critics to acknowledge the structural concerns of the Tales. He points out that Tales of a Traveller "is the work of a short-story writer who had not quite discovered his form, even though he had already, partly by chance, written two or three stories that are destined to survive" (p. 194). Hedges also notes Irving's letter to Brevoort which discusses his concern with style and form. In response to the bad reviews Irving writes, "I fancy much of what I value myself upon in writing, escapes the observation of the great mass of my readers: who are intent more upon the story than the way in which it is told."¹⁷

Indeed, "the way in which it is told" is the delightful, and too often overlooked achievement, in the Tales. Each of the four parts has an independent structure which integrates several individual selections. Part I, "Strange Stories," is narrated by the nervous gentleman, who previously narrated "The Stout Gentleman" in Bracebridge Hall. Though ostensibly the section deals with ghost stories, what Irving is in fact doing is burlesquing some of the traditional devices of the ghost story. One review attacked the tone of these stories.

They are old stories, and I am sorry to add, they are not improved by their new dress. The tone

¹⁷ Letters to Brevoort, 2, p. 185.

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in which Mr. Irving does them up, is quite wrong. A ghost story ought to be a ghost story.¹⁸

Obviously, this critic misunderstands what Irving is doing in Part I.

Part II, "Buckthorne" is the revised aborted novel which Irving had originally written for Bracebridge Hall, though it was finally omitted. It is a long, rather tedious autobiographical story of a young Englishman's adventures as an adolescent. Because it is not one of the better examples of Irving's framing stories, and it does not contribute anything new to our knowledge of Irving's skill, it is not considered in this study.

Part III, "The Italian Banditti" is narrated by Geoffrey Crayon. As in Part I the framing story is closely integrated with the sketches and tales enclosed by it. This time the concern is not with the supernatural, but with the threat and terror of being attacked and raped by highway robbers in Italy. The entire section, and the young Italian's story in particular, are uncharacteristically direct in dealing with sexual violence. It was this section, of course, that drew most of the rage of the critics who were offended by the tale of the young robber,

. . . where a scene the most revolting to humanity is twice unnecessarily forced on the reader's imagination. We say unnecessarily, for how much

¹⁸"Letters of Timothy Tickler," p. 295.

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more truly tragical, as well as more decent, would that tale have been, if the scene where Rosetta is left alone with the Captain had been omitted; and the "lot" had fallen on the unhappy lover who was so soon to be her executioner.¹⁹

Modern readers are not nearly so offended by the young robber's tale. Today's readers, in fact, can much more easily recognize that the sexual concerns of Part III are essential--both thematically and structurally--to the success of the entire section.

Part IV, "The Money Diggers" is not as structurally unified as the previous sections. The framing device is not skillfully employed for the individual selections are not carefully integrated with the framing story. Of the five selections in Part IV only the last two "Wolfert Webber, or Golden Dreams" and "The Adventure of the Black Fisherman" are directly connected to each other. The opening two selections "Hell-Gate" and "Kidd the Pirate" serve as introductions both to the thematic concerns and the framing structure of the entire section. "The Devil and Tom Walker" though thematically related is structurally independent of the other selections. Perhaps the most glaring weakness in the structure of Part IV is that Irving fails to return to the framing story at the end of the section. The major difference in form which distinguishes Part IV from Part I or III is that in Part I and III it is almost impossible to

¹⁹Gazette, I, No. 15, p. 229.

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fully discuss an individual selection without discussing the section as a whole. In Part IV, however, since the selections are not skillfully woven into the frame, it is possible to treat some of the selections, such as "The Devil and Tom Walker," independent of the framing story.

The critical response to Tales of a Traveller undoubtedly influenced the writing of Irving's next collection, The Alhambra (1832). Irving brooded over the reviews of the Tales and became increasingly anxious both to sustain his reputation and to secure an income.²⁰ The Alhambra resolved some of these difficulties. Unlike the Tales which was attacked for the lack of German materials, The Alhambra is composed entirely of Spanish materials inspired by Irving's visit to Spain in 1828-29.²¹ The volume contains a series of loosely connected sketches and tales about the Alhambra and the surrounding countryside. The collection opens with "The Journey" which relates Irving's trip through Spain to Granada. The remainder of the volume is devoted to his sojourn at the Alhambra during which he attempts to recapture the romantic traditions and the past glory of the area. Indeed the geographic location, the emphasis on romanticism and the thematic concern with Boabdil (the legendary

²⁰Hedges, p. 236.

²¹For an explanation of the preparation of The Alhambra, see Williams, I, p. 373.

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Moorish hero) provide the major unity of the collection. The romanticism of The Alhambra is perhaps its most distinctive characteristic. Fred Pattee feels that Irving completely surrendered to romanticism in this collection:

The book is an Arabesque, as redolent of the Orient as the tales of Scheherezade. No more travesty, no more romance tempered with rollicking humor verging at times upon coarseness, as in "The Bold Dragoon." His surrender was complete: "For my part, I gave myself up, during my sojourn in the Alhambra, to all the romantic and fabulous traditions connected with the pile. I lived in the midst of an Arabian tale, and shut my eyes, as much as possible, to everything that called me back to everyday life." As a result no other American has caught so richly and so completely the full spirit of the Oriental story-world. (p. 17)

William Hedges also emphasizes the book's romantic quality though he does not agree with the claim that Irving did indeed surrender himself as completely as his statement indicates. As Hedges points out the romantic qualities and the unity of the book are greatly improved in the revised edition:

By adding and rearranging material, Irving managed in the revised edition of The Alhambra to intensify the suggestion, already apparent in parts of the original, that his temporary withdrawal from the "dusty world" was a kind of enchantment. His imagination seems to transform landscapes and interiors into settings for romances and Arabian tales. Transports of joy lift him out of the present and carry him back into a timeless fictitious past, although he likes to think that he is only playing with illusions, temporarily keeping the everyday world at a safe distance. He still has one eye on a present which lives in the shadow of the past he now inhabits. (pp. 263-64)

Another improvement evident in the revised edition is Irving's emphasis on Boabdil. Hedges finds the 1850

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edition a better book "because it is unified around the author's often poignant identification with Boabdil" (p. 266).

Despite these unifying qualities, The Alhambra in many ways is structurally inferior to Tales of a Traveller. Except for those selections which act as introductions to others, Irving makes little attempt to formally connect selections. The volume is a series of pieces loosely strung together. Even within individual selections the structure is often deficient. There is certainly no selection which could be classified as a successful short story. Most of the pieces are either sketches or tales--though some are essays and one or two can be loosely classified as framing stories. In the sketches, Irving describes the Alhambra and his response to it. The tales are based on the legends associated with the area. Usually several legends are combined into one tale, but too often the integration is poorly done. The structural weaknesses of The Alhambra are indeed disappointing to the reader who has examined the structural accomplishments in Tales of a Traveller.

Irving's contemporaries, however, responded favorably to The Alhambra. The Americans liked it because it allowed them to "dwell in Europe," and because it increased "the elegance of American taste."²²

²²Williams, II, p. 318.

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In England "the reviewers hailed him as a kind of literary prodigal son; he had at last followed their advice and returned to the type of writing which had brought him fame a decade earlier" (Williams, II, p. 318). Modern critics are not lavish with their praise though Darrel Abel calls The Alhambra one of Irving's best books (p. 335). Stanley Williams agrees that "in some respects [the book] excells all other writings of Irving, especially in its brilliance of coloring and warmth of tone." Williams, however, goes on to point out the book's weaknesses too:

The fault, nevertheless, of The Alhambra is precisely this evenness of tone. No section is so insipid as "The Pride of the Village" nor so puerile as parts of Bracebridge Hall. On the other hand, none rises, as does "Westminster Abbey" in The Sketch Book into distinguished writing. (I, p. 376)

Once again in The Alhambra the role of the narrator is important. Though the original publication indicated that Crayon was the author, the book was never closely associated with Crayon as the earlier collections. It soon appeared under Irving's own name, and in the revised edition The Alhambra is credited to Irving while the three previous collections are credited to Crayon (Hedges, p. 265). Though at first glance this may appear to be simply a technical difference, the implications are more significant. For the first time the actual physical presence of Irving himself in the book is acknowledged.

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There is no longer any guise of a narrator whose apparent concern is to describe English life but who is actually revealing much of his own character. This time it is Irving himself giving us his response to Spain.

Even more significant is the obvious similarities between Irving as narrator and Crayon as narrator. The Alhambra dispels any possibility that Crayon is a persona in the modern sense of the word. The narrator of The Alhambra exhibits all the characteristics of Crayon. He is a traveller who often enjoys solitude yet feels lonely and separated from others. He closely observes people and places, often noting social differences. He is a man who dwells on the glory of the past, who withdraws into the world of imagination and dream, who explores history, legend, and the supernatural. He is unsure of his own abilities, apologizes for the lack of "weight" in his writing, and often attempts to compensate for this lack by footnoting unnecessarily. Indeed all the characteristics of Crayon are evident in the narrator of The Alhambra--Irving himself.

A reading of these four collections indicates that Irving's use of narrators is his most characteristic trait as a writer of short fiction. He relied heavily on assumed names under which he published most of his works. George Hellman has observed that Irving was 50 years old

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before a piece of his writing appeared under his own name.²³ Geoffrey Crayon and Diedrich Knickerbocker are his two best known pseudonyms though he had several others. In his framing stories, as will be demonstrated in Chapter IV, he relied on several narrators. Yet there is a marked similarity in the personalities of all these narrators who are physically present in the selection. Irving's narrators refer to themselves as observers of human nature--of the people and places around them. They habitually draw moral generalizations and abstractions from what they observe--which is to say that both their philosophy and pleasure is often derived vicariously rather than directly. When the narrator is physically present in the selection, the characters and incidents around him are seldom dramatically or realistically portrayed. Instead what we see is usually filtered through the narrator's perception. He interprets for us and thus, we often learn as much, if not more, about him as about the people and events he describes. This duality of focus is particularly evident in Irving's sketches. Indeed, it is the central characteristic of a sketch. One might say that the physical presence of a narrator in a selection will surely prevent it from becoming a short story. For what happens all too often is that the

²³George Hellman, Washington Irving, Esquire (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925), p. 66.

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narrator indicates a place, a person, or an incident as the central concern of the selection, but, in fact, the narrator himself--his views, reactions, experiences, and personality--is equally emphasized. Even when he ostensibly is telling a "story" about someone else, the personality of the narrator usually intrudes sufficiently to upset the focus and turn what might have been a short story into a tale or a sketch. This is perhaps most evident in "The Stout Gentleman," but is also discernible in many other sketches.

Of course, when Irving removes the narrator's presence from a selection, a short story does not automatically take shape, though the characters and actions are usually more dramatically revealed. The use of a narrator or the control of the point of view of a story is only one of the fictional elements which contributes to the making of a short story. It does appear, however, that once Irving is relieved of the chore of controlling a narrator's physical presence in a selection, he can exercise more control over the other fictional elements. And it is the skill of shaping and controlling all these elements--including point of view--that determines the success or failure of Irving's short fiction.

Even this brief introductory discussion of The Sketch Book, Bracebridge Hall, Tales of a Traveller, and The Alhambra reveals little in the way of significant

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progress or development in the themes or forms of Irving's writing. Some critics, in fact, believe that Irving never again matched The Sketch Book though he tried.

Bracebridge Hall (1822) had much of the old charm, but it was too attenuated; already the vein which had seemed so rich had begun to run thin. For the rest of his life he would strive to recapture the mood of his classic of indolence, first in Germany with Tales of a Traveller (1824), then in Spain with The Alhambra (1832), and finally at home in Tarrytown on the Hudson. (Spiller, p. 26)

Certainly the formal development of his shorter fiction as it is represented in these four collections does not evolve in any neat pattern. The selections in The Sketch Book exhibit the greatest range both in form and quality. Three of the four forms of Irving's short fiction appear in The Sketch Book--sketches, tales, and short stories. Only the framing story is omitted. What is more, some of Irving's best short stories and worst sketches are included in this early volume. Though he did pursue the framing device, after The Sketch Book, Irving wrote nothing to match the quality of "Rip Van Winkle." So it is not altogether erroneous to say that formally he progressed very little beyond The Sketch Book. There is some structural progress, however. The overall arrangement is better unified in Bracebridge Hall and though he does rely again on sketches and tales, he also includes a framing story, a form which is further explored in the next volume, Tales of a Traveller. This structural development ends with the Tales, however. The Alhambra

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reverts to the simplest of forms. Only the loosest of framing stories is included and many of the sketches and tales are structurally deficient. The most likely explanation for Irving's reluctance to pursue his interest in more complex forms was the negative critical reaction to the Tales. The Alhambra placated the critics; it was just what they wanted--a Spanish Sketch Book--not as good as the original but more satisfactory than its less predictable predecessor. And so with this last collection Irving abandoned his brief exploration of form in his short fiction.

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CHAPTER I

THE SKETCH

The sketch is the most characteristic form of Irving's short fiction.* Nearly all the writings which include the physical presence of Crayon or Irving as narrator are sketches. As has been already noted, the sketch is essentially a descriptive picture of life as it is seen by the narrator. The narrator's personality usually is emphasized as much as the ostensible topic of description. This chapter attempts, through a discussion of a variety of sketches, to demonstrate the essential aspects of an Irving sketch, and also to suggest that the sketches contain the roots of the American short story. The successful short story--such as "Rip Van Winkle"--skillfully integrates characterization, setting, action or conflict, mood, and point of view to produce a unified effect. Irving seldom was able to master all these elements in a given selection. His

* Though all four volumes contain sketches only those from The Sketch Book, Bracebridge Hall, and The Alhambra are included here. The sketches in Tales of a Traveller are discussed in Chapter IV.

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sketches usually focus on one or two of these elements. Though all his sketches emphasize the role of the narrator, he usually focuses also on character, setting, or events. The opening selection of the chapter, "The Wife," is a typical Irving sketch--one which attempts to integrate several elements. The sketches which follow emphasize characterization, action, and setting--in that order. Several sketches which give special emphasis to the narrator are then discussed and the chapter concludes with a discussion of "The Stout Gentleman," the sketch which probably comes closest to being a short story.

"The Wife," one of the early selections in The Sketch Book, is in many ways a typical Irving sketch. The topic of this selection, an examination of a marriage undergoing financial crisis, is said "to have been taken from the married life of Allston."¹ Basically the selection presents Crayon's version of the ideal wife and the ideal marriage relationship which survives any hardship. Crayon begins by generalizing about women's capacity to withstand hardship, comparing the ideal wife to a vine:

As the vine, which has long twined its graceful foliage about the oak, and been lifted by it into sunshine, will, when the hardy plant is rifted by the thunderbolt, cling round it with its caressing tendrils, and bind up its shattered boughs; so is it

¹Stanley T. Williams, The Life of Washington Irving, Vol. I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 429.

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beautifully ordered by Providence, that woman, who is the mere dependent and ornament of man in his happier hours, should be his stay and solace when smitten with sudden calamity; winding herself into the rugged recesses of his nature, tenderly supporting the drooping head, and binding up the broken heart. (pp. 34-35)

To support his theory Crayon cites as an example a married couple who appear to be ideally in love. Leslie, the husband, is devoted to his wife and wants her life with him to be "like a fairy tale" (p. 36). When faced with financial collapse, he is afraid and embarrassed to tell his wife of their situation. Encouraged, however, by his conversation with Crayon, Leslie does finally tell her and he finds her to be loving and understanding. Thus, the sketch is indeed like a fairy tale, complete with its setbacks and its happy ending.

Though this selection is entitled "The Wife," it is Crayon himself who is the central character for he is more fully characterized than either Leslie or Mary. A considerable amount of information can be gathered about Crayon's nature from reading this particular sketch. Perhaps most obvious is his wistful admiration and longing for the state of marriage. Through most of The Sketch Book and Bracebridge Hall Crayon wavers between desiring independence and longing for the companionship of others. However, he has struck out on a solitary journey in The Sketch Book and must therefore be self-sufficient. In an earlier selection he praises and

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admires Roscoe for his independence. "He is independent of the world around him. . . . The solitude of such a mind is its state of highest enjoyment" (p. 29). One suspects at times that Crayon, too, attempts to achieve such a state. Yet, we repeatedly find him seeking the company of others and wistfully observing reunions. In "The Wife" he seems almost vicariously to enjoy the happiness of marriage. The vicarious enjoyment of the relationships of others is, in fact, characteristic of Crayon. His rapture with the blissful state of marriage is evident in the final description of the couple:

He caught her to his bosom--he folded his arms around her--he kissed her again and again--he could not speak, but the tears gushed into his eyes; and he has often assured me that though the world has since gone prosperously with him, and his life has, indeed, been a happy one, yet never has he experienced a moment of more exquisite felicity. (p. 43)

Crayon's attitude toward others often indicates his desire to relate; yet he maintains a distance from the people and events around him. This is partly no doubt an attempt to maintain the appearance of objectivity. He repeatedly asserts the authenticity of his tales and reports. But partly the detachment stems from his inability to directly involve himself in the intensity of personal encounters. He observes, comments, advises, philosophizes--and at times he appears to desire intimacy--but he is hesitant, possibly incapable, of meeting the

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demands and openness of personal involvement. He remains instead as an "alienated observer."²

Crayon's alienation is in part Irving's own personal alienation. Though he never married he was never content with his solitary life. His narrative distance from the incidents he describes is no doubt a result of his own personal estrangement. Thus, it is difficult--perhaps impossible--to distinguish what is characteristic only of Crayon, a fictitious creation of Irving, from what is characteristic of Irving and then transferred to Crayon. The Alhambra demonstrates just how little difference there is between Irving and his fictional narrators. It is more difficult, however, to determine what is intentional in the creation of Crayon and what is simply a result of Irving's failure as an artist. The failure to integrate the narrator functionally into the conflict and action of a given work may stem from Irving's artistic weaknesses or it may stem from his psychological inclination to consciously detach himself from events. Whatever the reason, it is clear that the detachment of the narrator is characteristic of most of Irving's sketches, and it is, in fact, one of their essential qualities.

²William L. Hedges, Washington Irving: An American Study, 1802-1832, The Goucher College Series (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p. 128.

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Detachment is only one of Crayon's attributes, however. He also has a tendency to "paint" his observations; that is, he often views external reality as a still life painting. In "The Wife" this is most obviously demonstrated in the initial description of the couple:

I have often noticed the mute rapture with which he would gaze upon her in company, of which her sprightly powers made her the delight; and how, in the midst of applause, her eye would still turn to him, as if there alone she sought favor and acceptance. When leaning on his arm, her slender form contrasted finely with his tall manly person. (p. 36)

The final description of the couple enjoying "exquisite felicity" is another of these paintings, and it is not at all surprising that his writing has been compared to paintings.

Crayon's characteristic moments of insecurity and self-doubt are also evident in this sketch. Sometimes this insecurity takes the form of asserting his authority, and assuring the reader of the authenticity of the tale he is about to relate. In "The Wife" Crayon confidentially advises Leslie; then has a moment of hesitation:

I must confess, notwithstanding all I had said, I felt some little solicitude for the result. Who can calculate on the fortitude of one whose life has been a round of pleasures? . . . In short, I could not meet Leslie the next morning without trepidation. He had made the disclosure. (p. 39)

These hesitations of Crayon often are feeble attempts on Irving's part to create tension in a piece. The hesitation combined with Leslie's anxiety about the outcome

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of his confession are the only evidences of tension in this sketch and as such they are weak indeed.

The general organization of "The Wife," which moves from generalization to specific example, then to a final reaffirmation, is also typical of Irving. What distinguishes this selection from an essay is that the incident is more central than is the generalization. What prevents the sketch from being a short story is that the incident cannot function independent of the narrator--or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the incident is subordinated to the narrator and dramatically removed from the reader. The incident is, thus, not independently realized.

What is disturbing is the poor integration of the introduction and the specific example. Irving begins with the generalization that women are able to withstand much misfortune, that they are like vines supporting men, and then by way of example, he introduces "a domestic story of which I was once a witness." Next he presents directly a distant pictorial description of the couple and informs the reader of the husband's financial reverses. The picture serves as a kind of exposition and the financial situation serves as an inciting incident for what the reader expects to develop into a drama. We expect to be thrust into the midst of things. Instead there follows a series of three conversations between the

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husband, Leslie, and the narrator. Unfortunately, the dialogue is not coordinated with the action, character development, or setting. Crayon merely says his friend "came to me one day; and related his whole situation in a tone of the deepest despair." We do not know specifically where the two meet or what the surroundings look like. There is little attempt to reinforce characterization with gesture, action, or setting. Crayon does describe Leslie's despair:

I saw his grief was eloquent, and I let it have its flow; for sorrow relieves itself by words. When his paroxysm had subsided and he had relapsed into moody silence, I resumed the subject gently, and urged him to break his situation at once to his wife. He shook his head mournfully, but positively. (p. 38)

At another point, Crayon includes some stage directions which help the reader imagine the action, such as Crayon's gesture of encouragement to Leslie--"stepping up, and grasping him warmly by the hand" (p. 39).

But for the most part the dialogue reads like a debate--a series of responding speeches. In the first conversation Leslie relates his despair and Crayon philosophizes about wives and marriage. The next morning in the second conversation Leslie describes the scene of the previous evening when he broke the news to Mary. The reader is thus twice removed from this scene which should be the central drama of the piece. Crayon responds with more advice.

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The third and final conversation takes place on the way to the couple's new lodgings of the couple. Leslie's speech concerning his anxiety about how he will find his wife after her first day in altered circumstances reads like an expository warning of possible disaster. Mary's only speech in the entire sketch--an attempt on Irving's part to dramatize the truth of his theory--is but a mechanical mouthing of idealistic cliches. The speech reads almost like a parody of romanticism:

"My dear George," cried she, "I am so glad you are come! I have been watching and watching for you; and running down the lane, and looking out for you. I've set out a table under a beautiful tree behind the cottage; and I've been gathering some of the most delicious strawberries, for I know you are fond of them--and we have such excellent cream--and every thing is so sweet and still here--Oh!" said she, putting her arm within his, and looking up brightly in his face, "Oh, we shall be so happy!" (p. 43)

Nearly all the dialogue of the sketch is in effect a clumsy and unsuccessful attempt to add drama to the piece. But the conversation reads like a philosophical debate rather than like the realistic, intimate discussion of two friends. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Irving is, by the very inclusion of dialogue, attempting to write something other than an essay. He is trying to use dialogue to further the action and, thus, to create drama. He fails because he is either unwilling or unable to present the drama

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directly. We witness the mounting tension and the eventual resolution between the couple from a distance. Crayon is ever-present between us and the couple, guiding and, in fact, detaching us from the immediacy and intensity of the relationship. His very presence weakens the dramatic intensity of the conflict.

It is apparent, then, that though many of the elements of a short story are present in "The Wife"--dialogue, characterization, setting, tension, theme--none of them is fully utilized. Except for the description of the cottage and an occasional reference to the time of day or the passage of time, setting is virtually ignored. When he wished to, Irving could powerfully render a setting, but here he neglects to use setting to reinforce characterization or action, or to intensify the conflict. And the tension of the sketch is only superficial. Crayon's hesitations and Leslie's anxiety are mechanical, and therefore, unsuccessful attempts to build tension. Without genuine tension, whatever sense of resolution there is becomes ineffectual.

The characterization in the sketch is embryonic. Leslie, though he is given a conflict, is one-dimensional. He is neither revealed nor developed. He learns that his wife can face adversity, but this does not seem to alter him in any noticeable way except to make him love her more. Mary is, of course, a stereotype of what Irving

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views as the ideal wife. Her one speech is a poor substitute for realistic dialogue. Of the three characters, only the narrator is really characterized. He is the central character, and we do learn a great deal about him.

The role of the narrator is directly related to the lack of conflict and tension in "The Wife." Neither the narrator nor the reader is ever allowed to become directly involved in the conflict. Mary, the ostensible subject of the sketch, is never objectified for us. She is never dramatically portrayed. We aren't allowed to overhear her feelings--except for that brief mechanical speech at the conclusion and the opening description of her. What we experience instead is Crayon's reactions, observations, and emotions. We see the incident through his eyes and are subject to his limitations as an observer. Thus, any conflict we feel is confined to our perceptions of Crayon rather than drawn from the ostensible drama of the sketch. Indeed, it is Crayon, himself, who is the central character.

Though "The Wife" is typical of Irving's sketches, some of his sketches characterize other people, in addition to the narrator.* "The Busy Man" from Bracebridge Hall serves to illustrate a sketch which emphasizes characterization. As in most Crayon sketches, the narrator's

* For a discussion of "The Veteran" see Appendix, pp. 233-34.

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perceptions are heavily emphasized. We view the subject of the sketch, Master Simon, the family bachelor, entirely through Crayon's eyes. Crayon is a guest at Bracebridge Hall and does occasionally participate in activities, but he is for the most part simply an observer, an outsider who watches and records. His central intention in "The Jolly Man" is to characterize Master Simon, which he does in a detached, non-dramatic way; yet he does successfully employ indirect methods of characterization. After an initial direct description of Simon as a man "full of bustle, with a thousand petty things to do, and persons to attend to," a man "eternally busy about nothing," Crayon continues his characterization by describing Simon's chambers:

He has fitted it up in his own taste, so that it is a perfect epitome of an old bachelor's notions of convenience and arrangement. The furniture is made up of odd pieces from all parts of the house, chosen on account of their suiting his notions, or fitting some corner of his apartment. (pp. 20-21)

These objects in the rooms serve to reflect the interests of the man who occupies it.

Adjoining to his room is a small cabinet, which he calls his study. Here are some hanging shelves, of his own construction, on which are several old works on hawking, hunting, and farriery, and a collection or two of poems and songs of the reign of Elizabeth, which he studies out of compliment to the Squire; together with the Novelist's Magazine, the Sporting Magazine, the Racing Calendar, a volume or two of the Newgate Calendar, a book of peerage, and another of heraldry. (p. 21)

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In addition to the books, Crayon takes note of the sporting equipment, the musical equipment, sketches of landscapes, and other evidences of Simon's avocations, all of which he sums up as evidence of "a man of many accomplishments, who knows a little of every thing, and does nothing well" (p. 22).

Finally, the character is further rounded by a description of Simon's dealings with other people. Old Christy, "the most ancient servant in the place" was "very contradictory and pragmatistical" and apt "to differ from Master Simon now and then, out of mere captiousness" (p. 23). Crayon, however, is "surprised at the good humor with which Master Simon bore his contradictions." Both Simon's good humored responses to Christy and his acknowledgement that Christy gave him his "first knowledge in hunting" indicate Simon's willingness to give credit where credit is due. But the fact that Crayon is surprised by this behavior indicates that Simon is not always so generous. A second encounter which adds to our knowledge of Simon is his greeting to Lady Lillycraft, the Squire's sister, whose arrival causes some commotion. Crayon observes that Simon is "most assiduous and devout in his attentions upon this old lady." But once again Crayon undercuts the appearance and motives of his subject. He first observes that Simon is "swept off in the vortex that followed in the wake of

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his lady" (p. 25), and then he ends the sketch by reporting that Simon later informs him that Lady Lillycraft was "of large fortune, which the captain would inherit, and that her estate lay in one of the best sporting counties in all England" (p. 25). Knowing Simon's interest in hunting, we are left somewhat suspicious about the sincerity of his devotion to the lady.

Not many of Irving's sketches can be said to emphasize action or conflict. Those pieces which do have a well-defined conflict and a resolution are perhaps best labeled as tales rather than sketches. A few sketches though, do focus on action.

In "Hawking" (Bracebridge Hall) Crayon describes a day of hunting. As usual the narrator is more of an observer than a participator. He readily admits his inexperience in hunting and explains that he keeps toward the end of the party, lagging behind, so that he "might take in the whole picture" (p. 119). He reacts to the scenery and weather as much as to the action of the hunt itself. He describes the "soft meadow, reeking with the moist verdure of spring" and the river which runs through it, "bordered by willows, which had put forth their tender early foliage" (p. 119). He hears a "distinct echo from the sunny wall of an old building on the opposite margin of the stream"; which the parson informs him is part of the area's folklore. Even

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the middle of the action when Christy releases the con the narrator is removed from the excitement. He uses on a rise "whence I had a good view of the sport" (121). The activity surrounding him is almost scenically painted for the reader.

I was pleased with the appearance of the party in the meadow, riding along in the direction that the bird flew; their bright beaming faces turned up to the bright skies as they watched the game; the attendants on foot scampering along, looking up, and calling out; and the dogs bounding and yelping with clamorous sympathy. (p. 121)

Yet despite the narrator's detachment which keeps him and the reader dramatically removed from the activity, there is some tension and a sense of action in the sketch. The tension begins early that morning when Crayon notes the flurry of preparations.

The horses were led up and down before the door; everybody had something to say, and something to do, and hurried hither and thither; there was a direful yelping of dogs; some that were to accompany us being eager to set off, and others that were to stay at home being whipped back to their kennels. (pp. 117-18)

The hunting party too is described in some detail. Julia is attired in "a hunting dress, with a light plume of feathers in her riding-hat." Lady Lillycraft is "dressed in her broad white beaver, tied under the chin, and a riding habit of the last century" (p. 118). Though the description itself is scenic, its position in the sketch (allowing the excitement of preparations) helps to release the tension of the hunt.

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There are three scenes of action. The first is the sighting of the quarry which interrupts Crayon's conversation with the parson.

The little man was just entering very largely and learnedly upon the subject, when we were startled by a prodigious bawling, shouting, and yelping. A flight of crows, alarmed by the approach of our forces, had suddenly rose from a meadow; a cry was put up by the rabble rout on foot. "Now, Christy! now is your time, Christy!" The Squire and Master Simon, who were beating up the river banks in quest of a heron, called out eagerly to Christy to keep quiet; the old man, vexed and bewildered by the confusion of voices, completely lost his head; in his flurry he slipped off the hood, cast off the falcon, and away flew the crows, and away soared the hawk. (pp. 120-21)

Crayon, however, does not allow the action to dominate the sketch. His own presence is felt throughout the sketch and here he temporarily draws attention to himself by noting his position on the rise and sketching the scene before him.

Our attention is once again drawn to the action of the hunt in the following paragraph. The hawk's pursuit of his quarry is described in considerable detail.

I confess, being no sportsman, I was more interested for the poor bird that was striving for its life, than for the hawk that was playing the part of a mercenary soldier. At length the hawk got the upper hand, and made a rushing stoop at her quarry, but the latter made as sudden a surge downwards, and slanting up again, evaded the blow, screaming and making the best of his way for a dry tree on the brow of a neighboring hill; while the hawk, disappointed of her blow, soared up again into the air, and appeared to be "raking" off. (p. 121)

The tension of the sketch continues in the next paragraph and the action of the hawk's pursuit is followed by

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on of a different kind. The party discovers that
 ia has been thrown from her horse.

Just then an exclamation from Lady Lillycraft made
 me turn my head. I beheld a complete confusion
 among the sportsmen in the little vale below us.
 They were galloping and running towards the edge
 of a bank; and I was shocked to see Miss Templeton's
 horse galloping at large without his rider. I
 rode to the place to which the others were hurry-
 ing, and when I reached the bank, which almost
 overhung the stream, I saw at the foot of it, the
 fair Julia, pale, bleeding, and apparently life-
 less, supported in the arms of her frantic lover.
 (p. 122)

soon learn that Julia is not seriously hurt and the
 nsion eases as "the cavalcade, which had issued forth
 gayly on this enterprise, returned slowly and pen-
 vely to the Hall" (p. 122). Another bustle of activity,
 is time more serious, concludes the action of the
 etch, when the servants receive the wounded Julia.

They came crowding down the avenue, each eager to
 render assistance. The butler stood ready with
 some curiously delicate cordial; the old house-
 keeper was provided with half a dozen nostrums,
 prepared by her own hands, according to the
 family recipe book; while her niece, the melting
 Phoebe, having no other way of assisting, stood
 wringing her hands, and weeping aloud. (p. 123)

e two paragraphs which conclude the sketch are devoted
 Crayon's observations on the effects of the day's
 ivity.

It is evident, of course, that action, though it
 emphasized more in this sketch than in others, does
 really dominate the sketch. Rather, the action is
 endent upon the narrator. He is everpresent, filtering

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nal events for the reader. Nor is the action shaped
 a plot. "Hawking" is thus not a tale; it is a
 ch--portraying Crayon's observations of the external
 d which in this instance is filled with the activity
 hunt.

"May-Day," another sketch in Bracebridge Hall,
 emphasizes action.* Like "Hawking," this sketch
 describes a group gathering, this time for the village
 celebration of May-Day. The selection refers to several
 nes of action, but only one--a tumultuous fight--is
 cribed in detail. Two other action scenes, a village
 ce and a political argument, are summarized for us.

"Westminster Abbey" (The Sketch Book), another
 ical Crayon sketch, dwells on the "gradual dilapi-
 ions of time," a theme familiar to all Irving readers.
 too, like the previous sketches, reveals, at least in
 t, the character of the narrator, but also it uses
 ting in a more functional way than most of the
 tches do.

The organization of the sketch is built around
 yon's wanderings in the abbey. His tour is carefully
 neated by the specifically described locations of
 ous tombs and effigies. In the course of his walk
 the physical surroundings and the time of day are

* For a more detailed discussion of "May Day,"
 Appendix, pp. 229-31.

tionally related to the narrator's emotional and philosophical state of mind, and all of these contribute to the pervading tone of the sketch.

The time and season are immediately established in the opening paragraph.

On one of those sober and rather melancholy days, in the latter part of Autumn, when the shadows of morning and evening almost mingle together, and throw a gloom over the decline of the year, I passed several hours in rambling about Westminster Abbey. There was something congenial to the season in the mournful magnificence of the old pile; and, as I passed its threshold, seemed like stepping back into the regions of antiquity, and losing myself among the shades of former ages. (p. 210)

The season and the building are thus appropriately matched, and the narrator's reaction to them prepares the reader for the selection's preoccupation with the past.

Scattered throughout the sketch are references to the time of day, particularly to the sunlight, which emphasize the temporal nature of life and fame. Light and darkness are used to illustrate Crayon's theories. Early in his tour he describes the sunlight in the square and the cloisters.

The sun was pouring down a yellow autumnal ray into the square of the cloisters; beaming upon a scanty plot of grass in the centre, and lighting up an angle of the vaulted passage with a kind of dusky splendor. From between the arcades, the eye glanced up to a bit of blue sky or a passing cloud; and beheld the sun-gilt pinnacles of the abbey towering into the azure heaven. (p. 211)

The "dusky splendor" is, of course, later thematically extended to include the lost glory of the past, particularly

ne "bright gems of thought, and golden veins of language" (p. 214). The tolling of the abbey clock reminds him of life's brevity.

Whilst I was yet looking down upon these gravestones, I was roused by the sound of the abbey clock, reverberating from buttress to buttress, and echoing among the cloisters. It is almost startling to hear this warning of departed time sounding among the tombs, and telling the lapse of the hour, which, like a billow, has rolled us onward towards the grave. (p. 212)

As he continues his tour, he notes that "the day was gradually wearing away" (p. 217), and when he reaches the tomb of "the lovely and unfortunate Mary," the light is considerably diminished.

A peculiar melancholy reigns over the aisle where Mary lies buried. The light struggles dimly through windows darkened by dust. The greater part of the place is in deep shadow, and the walls are stained and tinted by time and weather. (p. 219)

Despite the reassurance of the brief interlude of organ music which occurs while he is resting by the tomb, the daylight continues to diminish and serves to intensify the narrator's sense of gloom in the surroundings.

I sat for some time lost in that kind of reverie which a strain of music is apt sometimes to inspire: the shadows of evening were gradually thickening round me; the monuments began to cast deeper and deeper gloom; and the distant clock again gave token of the slowly waning day. (p. 220)

Finally, when he is preparing to leave the Abbey, there is no longer even any dusky splendor.

The last beams of day were now faintly streaming through the painted windows in the high vaults

above me; the lower parts of the abbey were already wrapped in the obscurity of twilight. The chapels and aisles grew darker and darker. (p. 222)

He finishes by noting that even the evening breeze "crept through the aisles like the cold breath of the grave" (p. 222).

It is not only his references to the passing time, but also his detailed descriptions of and reactions to the surroundings which help characterize the narrator and establish the tone of the sketch. That many of the tombs are described in considerable detail adds realism to the sketch and provides concrete stimulus for the narrator's philosophizing. For example, the physical position of "a knight in complete armor" catches Crayon's attention.

I paused to contemplate a tomb on which lay the effigy of a knight in complete armor. A large buckler was on one arm; the hands were pressed together in supplication upon the breast: the face was almost covered by the morion; the legs were crossed, in token of the warrior's having been engaged in the holy war. (pp. 214-15)

Later there is a detailed description of Henry the Seventh's chapel.

Along the sides of the chapel are the lofty stalls of the Knights of the Bath, richly carved of oak, though with the grotesque decorations of Gothic architecture. On the pinnacles of the stalls are affixed the helmets and crests of the knights, with their scarfs and swords; and above them are suspended their banners, emblazoned with armorial bearings, and contrasting the splendor of gold and purple and crimson, with the cold gray fretwork of the roof. (p. 217)

Such realistic descriptions of the surroundings are not the central concern of the narrator, however. With both these descriptions and, in fact, with most of the descriptions of surroundings, the realistic details are mixed with the narrator's impressionistic response, and thus, the setting often functions to characterize the narrator. For example, the previous description of Henry's chapel is preceded by Crayon's imaginative response.

On entering, the eye is astonished by the pomp of architecture, and the elaborate beauty of sculptured detail. The very walls are wrought into universal ornament, incrustated with tracery, and scooped into niches, crowded with the statues of saints and martyrs. Stone seems, by the cunning labor of the chisel, to have been robbed of its weight and density, suspended aloft, as if by magic, and the fretted roof achieved with the wonderful minuteness and airy security of a cobweb. (p. 217)

The narrator frequently shares his awe with the reader. His impressions of the surroundings are evident when he first enters the abbey.

On entering here, the magnitude of the building breaks fully upon the mind, contrasted with the vaults of the cloisters. The eyes gaze with wonder at clustered columns of gigantic dimensions, with arches springing from them to such an amazing height; and man wandering about their bases, shrunk into insignificance in comparison with his own handiwork. The spaciousness and gloom of this vast edifice produce a profound and mysterious awe. (p. 212)

His impressionistic response to the abbey is so strong, in fact, that he attributes an almost tangible quality to the atmosphere.

It seems as if the awful nature of the place presses down upon the soul, and hushes the beholder into noiseless reverence. (p. 213)

The mixture of realistic detail and imaginative response is again evident in Crayon's description of Mrs. Nightengale's tomb.

The bottom of the monument is represented as throwing open its marble doors, and a sheeted skeleton is starting forth. The shroud is falling from his fleshless frame as he launches his dart at his victim. She is sinking into her affrighted husband's arms, who strives, with vain and frantic effort, to avert the blow. The whole is executed with terrible truth and spirit; we almost fancy we hear the gibbering yell of triumph bursting from the distended jaws of the spectre. (p. 216)

A third technique which both renders the realism of the setting and emphasizes the narrator's isolation is the silence of the abbey which is only intermittently punctuated by sounds of daily living. On first entering the cloisters, Crayon notes "the quiet and seclusion" (p. 211) which later is interrupted by the "reverberating" abbey clock. Once in the abbey he is hushed into "noiseless reverence" (p. 213) which is later broken only by "the sweet-tongued bell [which] was summoning to evening prayers" (p. 217). His isolation from the external world is further emphasized by the references to diminished noises.

The sound of casual footsteps had ceased from the abbey. I could only hear, now and then, the distant voice of the priest repeating the evening service, and the faint responses of the choir; these paused for a time, and all was hushed. The stillness, the

desertion and obscurity that were gradually prevailing around, gave a deeper and more solemn interest to the place. (p. 219)

The most significant, and perhaps the most melodramatic, interruption of the silence is the long, inflated description of the paragraph devoted to the organ music. The description ends with a flourish.

It grows more and more dense and powerful--it fills the vast pile, and seems to jar the very walls--the ear is stunned--the senses are overwhelmed. And now it is winding up in full jubilee--it is rising from the earth to heaven--the very soul seems rapt away and floated upwards on this swelling tide of harmony! (p. 220)

Like the splendor of the sunlight described earlier, the force of the music is associated with lasting glory, and both express Crayon's desire to believe in immortality. But just as the light fades so the sound diminishes, and he is left in near darkness and silence. As he prepares to leave, he hears only "the distant footfall of a verger, traversing the Poet's Corner, [which] had something strange and dreary in its sound" (p. 222). And when he "passed out at the portal" the closing door fills the whole building with echoes. His concluding remarks indicate his lack of belief in immortality. The emptiness of the echoes almost reiterates his thoughts about the "emptiness of renown" (p. 222).

The narrator's reactions which repeatedly emphasize this emptiness and the "certainty of oblivion" (p. 222) permeate the sketch. Yet the organization gives

emphasis to the tour and the description of external surroundings. As a result the selection is a sketch rather than an essay, for in spite of the philosophizing and abstract commentary, the abbey itself dominates the selection. The narrator's observation of external reality gives rise to the philosophy rather than the abbey being merely an illustration of Crayon's opinions. This emphasis plus the characterization of Crayon as a narrator physically present in the selection qualify it as a sketch.

The character of Crayon in this sketch is consistent with our glimpse of him in the previous sketches. He once again is physically present in the selection and once again he reveals a good deal of his own personality. His fertile imagination, evident in many of the previous quotations, transforms the objects which surround him. When he's in the Poet's Corner, the stillness and silence make him feel as if he "were treading a mansion of that fabled city, where every being had been suddenly transmuted into stone" (p. 214). Later in Henry's chapel he lets his imagination conjure up the time when the hall "was bright with the valor and beauty of the land; glittering with the splendor of jewelled rank and military array; alive with the tread of many feet and the hum of an admiring multitude" (p. 218). And though he imagines the glory of the past and despairs of its death, his

reactions are not totally serious. After adjusting to the initial awe of the abbey, he is temporarily amused by the crowded conditions.

And yet it almost provokes a smile at the vanity of human ambition, to see how they are crowded together and jostled in the dust; what parsimony is observed in doling out a scanty nook, a gloomy corner, a little portion of earth, to those, whom, when alive, kingdoms could not satisfy. (p. 213)

Next to his vivid imagination, the most dominant feature of the narrator is once again his role as observer. Indeed observing the external world surrounding him seems to be his principal function. And though in this sketch one could say that he actively participates, that is, he is walking around in the abbey, it is significant that he is engaging himself with effigies and tombs rather than living people. He is not actively involving himself with life. The physical separation from active daily living which is imposed by entering the abbey helps to intensify Crayon's characteristic emotional alienation. Sequestered among the dead, he is again alone and withdrawn from humanity, this time gazing on the lost glory of others and lamenting the impossibility of immortality. Yet one suspects it is not merely the fate of others which concerns him. Hedges suggests that perhaps Crayon "begins to sense the past as also a potential trap for the imagination, where, like the little man in black, he may lose himself" (p. 133). Certainly it is not unlikely that the preoccupation with the loss, not only of life, but of fame

may be indicative of Irving's own fear of the loss of his literary imagination and reputation, a fear common to all authors. But an even deeper and more fundamental need is perhaps evident in Crayon's venture into the inner recesses of the abbey. Hedges suggests a kind of cultural quest:

His loneliness continually drives him into blind alleys and dark corners, through small doorways into courtyards cut off from all but a few muffled sounds of the outside world and perhaps a ray of sunshine. A small plot of grass may give the setting the appearance of a garden, but it is not one where Crayon can stay for long. He passes through further doorways into darker interiors; the womb-like openings take him into chambers of the past. (p. 134)

Yet Hedges' explanation does not really satisfy the implications of his own suggestions and observations. Surely more than a cultural quest is indicated by this journey through womblike passages into dark interiors. One wonders if Crayon's physical and emotional withdrawal into the dark interiors of the abbey may in fact suggest a kind of inner psychological quest to find himself.

Some of Irving's sketches give an even greater emphasis to the function of the narrator than those already discussed. Bracebridge Hall has a good share of these sketches and interestingly enough, three of them concern love or lovers.* In each of these three, the narrator is the observer, the outsider who watches

*For a fuller discussion of these sketches ("Love Symptoms," "Lovers' Troubles," and "The Lovers") see Appendix, pp. 225-28.

others from a distance, sometimes following them. Each of these selections also borders on being an essay. However, instead of citing an example to prove a theory, Crayon watches the behavior of others, then draws generalizations from them. This difference in emphasis is what distinguishes these selections as sketches rather than essays.

"The Bachelors" (Bracebridge Hall) is an even more "telling" revelation of Crayon as narrator. Crayon's (and Irving's) own bachelorhood particularly qualifies the narrator as an authority on the subject. He cites a couple of examples of the fate of aging bachelors, but what is of special interest is the scene in which the General and Master Simon are "conversing with a buxom milkmaid in a Meadow" (p. 64). After describing their activity, Crayon admits that he has been looking at them through a hedge.

As I looked at them through a hedge, I could not but think they would have made a tolerable group for a modern picture of Susannah and the two elders. It is true, the girl seemed in no wise alarmed at the force of the enemy; and I question, had either of them been alone, whether she would not have been more than they would have ventured to encounter. (p. 64)

Though Crayon uses the incident to illustrate behavior of aging bachelors, the physical act of watching--in voyeur fashion--is more striking to the reader. Here once again is Crayon an active, this time almost eager,

observer, willing to peer through a hedge, his own presence undetected, to watch the amorous activities of his friends. We cannot help but feel sympathy, mixed perhaps with some dismay, for a man who has so little of his own personal involvements that he resorts to such furtive observations of the personal lives of others.

We learn the most, perhaps, about Crayon in "St. Mark's Eve" (Bracebridge Hall). On this night, the Eve of St. Mark's, the company at dinner is informed by the parson that "if any one would watch in the church porch on this eve, for three successive years, from eleven to one o'clock at night, he would see on the third year the shades of those of the parish who were to die in the course of the year, pass by him into church, clad in their usual apparel" (p. 124). The conversation at the supper-table then turns to supernatural tales and prompts Crayon to state his own theory about the superstitious part of human nature.

There is, I believe, a degree of superstition lurking in every mind; and I doubt if any one can thoroughly examine all his secret notions and impulses without detecting it, hidden, perhaps, even from himself. It seems, in fact, to be part of our nature, like instinct in animals, acting independently of our reason. It is often found existing in lofty natures, especially those that are poetical and aspiring. (p. 126)

Later that evening we are privy to Crayon's musings in his chamber. He describes his surroundings briefly; then explains how he has been gazing out his window.

I have sat by the window and mused upon the dusky landscape, watching the lights disappearing, one by one, from the distant village; and the moon rising in her silent majesty, and leading up all the silver pomp of heaven. As I have gazed upon these quiet groves and shadowy lawns, silvered over, and imperfectly lighted by streaks of dewy moonshine, my mind has been crowded by "thick coming fancies," concerning those spiritual beings which

"-----walk the earth

Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep."
(p. 128)

He continues to muse about superstitions and supernatural events; the musing leads him eventually to a rare direct and personal self-revelation:

There are departed beings whom I have loved as I never again shall love in this world;--who have loved me as I never again shall be loved! If such beings do ever retain in their blessed spheres the attachments which they felt on earth; if they take an interest in the poor concerns of transient mortality, and are permitted to hold communion with those whom they have loved on earth, I feel as if now, at this deep hour of night, in this silence and solitude, I could receive their visitation with the most solemn, but unalloyed delight. (p. 131)

Here perhaps more obviously than anywhere else in the volume the voice of Irving himself seems to break through, seeking comfort from those who were then dead. Matilda, his first love, dead now for more than ten years, is probably the object of his longing. As he sits alone in his room night in a foreign country with no close relatives near, his loneliness is acute. His alienation from the living, active world he inhabits is intensified for

us when we see that he turns not to the living, but to the dead for solace and comfort.*

Of all the sketches which emphasize the role and character of the narrator, none are as skillfully handled as "The Stout Gentleman" from Bracebridge Hall. This selection has received considerable critical attention; most critics believe it is one of Irving's best short works and it has been described by some critics as a short story. Yet a close examination reveals that the selection is not really a short story, but rather, a skillfully written sketch, certainly one of Irving's best sketches.

"The Stout Gentleman" introduces for the first time in Bracebridge Hall a new narrator, the nervous gentleman, who later also narrates Part I of Tales of a Traveller. We are informed in "Storytelling," the selection which introduces "The Stout Gentleman" that the narrative was "written out" by Crayon, but the "I" in the sketch refers, of course, to the nervous gentleman. What is most striking about "The Stout Gentleman" is that it contains many of the characteristics of a successful short story. It has characters, setting, tension, plot, mood, and a consistently maintained point of view.

*For a discussion of other sketches which emphasize the narrator ("The Generalife" and "The Mysterious Chamber") see Appendix, p. 224, pp. 231-32.

The plot is rather simple. The narrator, who like most of Irving's narrators is on a journey, is forced because of "a slight indisposition" to remain overnight at a small town inn. It was a "rainy Sunday in the gloomy month of November" (p. 75). Setting plays an important role in the sketch. Considerable attention is given to the weather and to the external surroundings which, of course, reinforce the narrator's mood. He is trapped by the weather and he entertains himself for a while by gazing out the window at the stable yard, searching unsuccessfully for someone to talk to; he tries reading magazines, but abandons them all. His restlessness and boredom are convincingly portrayed until at length he declares:

I was dreadfully hipped. The hours seemed as if they would never creep by. The very ticking of the clock became irksome. (p. 79)

His boredom is then interrupted by the ringing of a bell and the voice of a waiter ordering breakfast for the stout gentleman in No. 13. With this interruption, the narrator's attention shifts to the stout gentleman.

In such a situation as mine, every incident is of importance. Here was a subject of speculation presented to my mind, and ample exercise for my imagination. I am prone to paint pictures to myself, and on this occasion I had some materials to work upon. Had the guest up stairs been mentioned as Mr. Smith, or Mr. Brown, or Mr. Jackson, or Mr. Johnson, or merely as "the gentleman in No. 13," it would have been a perfect blank to me. I should have thought nothing of it; but "The stout gentleman!"--the very name had something in it of the

picturesque. It at once gave the size; it embodied the personage to my mind's eye, and my fancy did the rest. (p. 79)

For the rest of the sketch the narrator occupies himself by gathering information about the stranger. Once again the narrator of an Irving piece entertains himself by watching others rather than by personally involving himself with others. Since this time the narrator is not Crayon but the nervous gentleman, we are led to believe that alienation is not simply a personality quirk of Crayon's but is in fact a characteristic which Irving invests in those narrators who are physically present in a given selection. In any case the narrator of this selection does not really participate in the activities he observes. Not until it is too late does he even attempt to personally confront the stout gentleman. Of course, part of his hesitation to ascertain the gentleman's identity is caused by his obvious enjoyment of the game of detecting. But in part, too, the hesitation and unwillingness is a consequence of his inability to actively participate. This characteristic we have noted again and again in other sketches. Irving's narrators view life from without. They look through windows, as Crayon does in "St. Mark's Eve" or in the Christmas sketch in The Sketch Book, or as the nervous gentleman does in this sketch. They even peer through hedges as Crayon does in "The Bachelors." They are

separated physically and emotionally from personal involvement. It is this detachment which is, in the end, most compelling in "The Stout Gentleman." For in this essay the narrator, in spite of his detachment, is integrated into the web of the plot. His presence is not secondary but of crucial importance.

Technically, the sketch can be viewed as a clever characterization of a person who is never really seen except, ironically, from the rear as he is entering his coach. We never get a direct physical description nor do we see him in dealings with others. Instead indirect methods are employed to characterize him. The narrator, by watching and listening (what Irving's narrators do best) collects clues about the stranger. We learn what he eats for breakfast, and that he is both impatient and particular. When the gentleman asks for the Times or the Chronicle, the narrator concludes that he is a political radical. This is reinforced by the narrator's belief that the man is "being so absolute and lordly where he had a chance." Hearing the man's footsteps, the narrator further surmises that "he evidently was a large man by the heaviness of his tread; and an old man from his wearing such creaking soles" (p. 81). And so the sketch continues as the narrator pieces together information from various sources.

Much of the activity is dramatically presented.

We overhear the maid's comments and watch her behavior. We also are allowed an intimate view of the narrator's boredom and later his anxiety. Tension is thus created both by the gradual gathering of information and by our desire to learn the identity of the stranger. We anticipate (with the narrator) his appearance at dinner. When the man does not appear, the narrator's curiosity intensifies until finally he again hears the gentleman walking overhead.

All at once the stout gentleman began to walk overhead, pacing slowly backwards and forwards. There was something extremely awful in all this, especially to one in my state of nerves. These ghastly great-coats, these guttural breathings, and the creaking footsteps of this mysterious being. His steps grew fainter and fainter, and at length died away. I could bear it no longer. I was wound up to the desperation of a hero of romance. "Be he who or what he may," said I to myself, "I'll have a sight of him!" I seized a chamber candle, and hurried up to No. 13. (p. 85)

We have thus finally arrived at what should be the moment of climax, but instead of confronting the stout gentleman, the narrator finds that the man has retired and in the sitting room there is nothing but the remnants of the gentleman's presence.

The door stood ajar. I hesitated--I entered: the room was deserted. There stood a large, broad-bottomed elbow-chair at a table, on which was an empty tumbler, and a "Times," newspaper, and the room smelt powerfully of Stilton cheese. (pp. 85-86)

The plot tension is not adequately resolved. Dissatisfied, the narrator retires.

I went to bed, therefore, and lay awake half the night in a terribly nervous state; and even when I fell asleep, I was still haunted in my dreams by the idea of the stout gentleman and his wax-topped boots. (p. 86)

The morning brings no resolution either. The gentleman leaves and the narrator catches only "a glimpse of the rear of a person getting in at the coach door" (p. 86).

There is then some plot tension and a character conflict of sorts. The narrator struggles, at first rather playfully, then more seriously to learn the identity of the mysterious stranger. But there is no resolution of either the conflict or the tension. What further prevents the sketch--skillful though it is in many ways--from being a full-fledged short story is the ambiguity of focus. Part of the difficulty lies in the question of who is the central character and whether he develops. Is the stout gentleman the central character or is the narrator? If we assume the former, then what we have is a plot-dominated story without a climax and without a resolution which makes the entire tale, except for some traces of humor, a rather pointless endeavor. If the narrator is intended as the central character, which is more probable, then the character of the stout gentleman is significant only in so far as he illuminates our understanding and perceptions of the narrator. We do, of course, learn a good deal about the narrator from his precise observations and conclusions. We also learn

about him from his increasing anxiety. But he has no significant internal struggle nor does he come to any self-perception. His character, in fact, remains rather static (except that he becomes increasingly nervous). He strikes us as another of Irving's almost pathetic narrators whose major enjoyment in life comes from observing others rather than participating himself. And in this case the narrator is deprived even of the pleasure of observing, for he achieves no satisfaction in the end.

The focus of the sketch is thus almost evenly divided between the narrator and the gentleman, so that neither carries the story. What is perhaps most emphasized in the sketch is neither the plot nor characterization, but rather the process of perceiving. In the course of gathering information, the narrator more than once changes his mind about the stout gentleman. First he thinks the gentleman is old; then he changes his mind.

This unknown personage could not be an old gentleman; for old gentlemen are not apt to be so obstreperous to chambermaids. He could not be a young gentleman; for young gentlemen are not apt to inspire such indignation. He must be a middle-aged man, and confounded ugly into the bargain, or the girl would not have taken the matter in such terrible dudgeon. I confess I was sorely puzzled. (pp. 81-82)

In the course of the day, the narrator paints several pictures of the gentleman, each of which is eventually abandoned.

The morning wore away in forming these and similar surmises. As fast as I wove one system of belief, some movement of the unknown would completely overturn it, and throw all my thoughts again into confusion. Such are the solitary operations of a feverish mind. (p. 83)

Rather than portraying the narrator's lack of perception, these contradictions and false surmises illustrate the complexities involved in any act of perceiving others. The process of gathering, examining, sorting, cataloguing, comparing, and eventually evaluating information in order to arrive at decisions is perhaps the true subject matter of the sketch. If the crucial quality of an Irving sketch is indeed the relationship between narrator and his external world, then "The Stout Gentleman" most certainly qualifies as a sketch, and in fact might be considered the most "ideal" sample of an Irving sketch.

Though Irving wrote many other sketches, the ones already discussed are sufficient to demonstrate the essential qualities of the form as Irving practiced it. The sketch was most conveniently suited to Irving's talents and personality as a writer and as a man. As Irving himself says in the opening selection of The Sketch Book, he "was always fond of visiting new scenes and observing strange characters and manners" (p. 13). Later in Bracebridge Hall he says that his "only aim is to paint characters and manners" (p. 14). The sketch most easily allowed him to pursue these interests--to observe others, to paint his surroundings, and at

times to discuss his thoughts and beliefs. In his sketches he could avoid the involvement necessary for intensive characterization or dramatization and thus, he could most easily follow the inclinations of his personality.

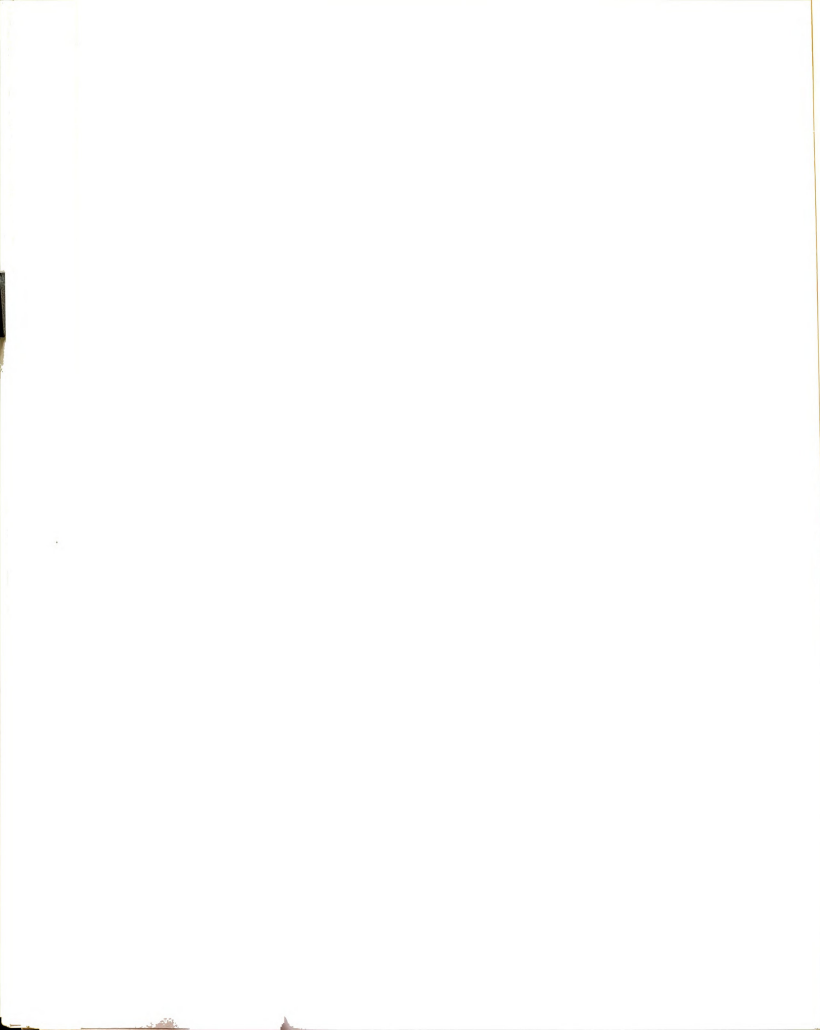
Irving, however, was not content to write only sketches; had he been, his contribution to American literature would have been much slighter than it is. Irving, like most writers, liked to hear and to tell stories and tales. His short fiction is full of references to groups of people sitting together exchanging tales. Some of these are related in detail to the reader.

The next chapter deals with those selections which can be classified as tales. In them, as we shall see, Irving faced some structural challenges not inherent in the sketch.

CHAPTER II

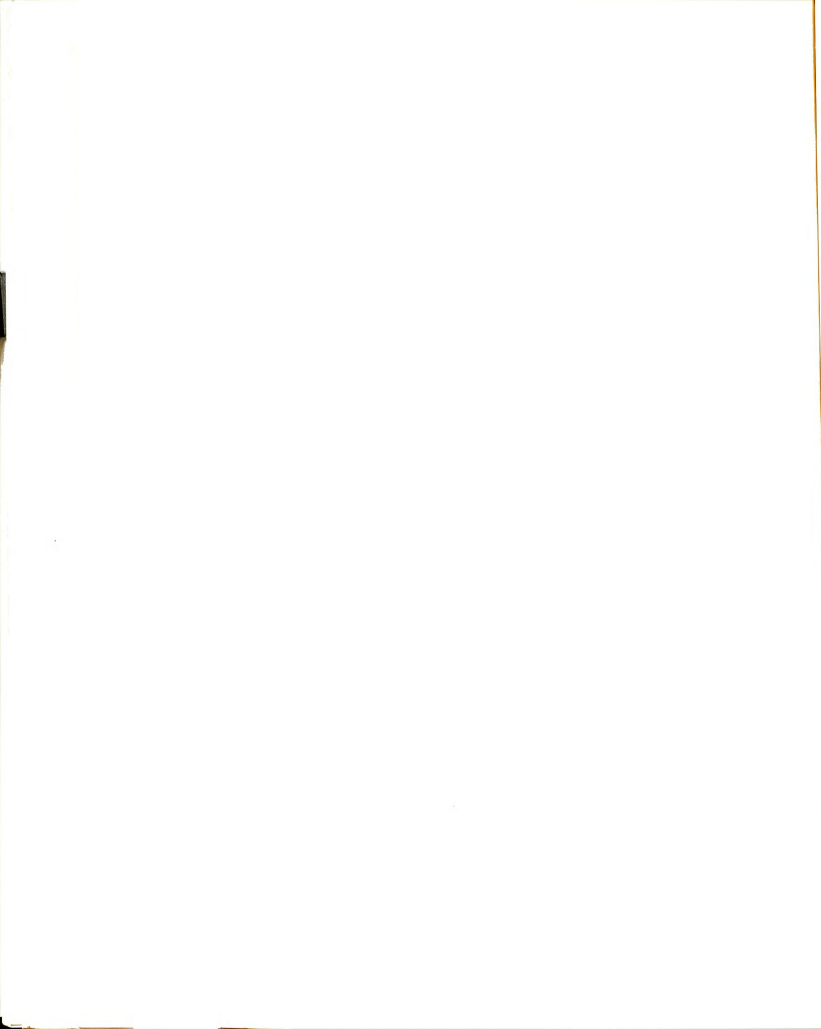
THE TALE

Any attempt to formally classify an author's work inevitably leads to some oversimplification. There are in Irving's work some short fictional pieces which are quite definitely not sketches nor can they be classified as successful short stories. They are perhaps most accurately labeled as tales; some of them are quite long. An Irving tale has many of the characteristics of a short story. It has a plot, a central character, a conflict, tension, a resolution. It often includes a functionally integrated setting, some dramatic scenes, some dialogue, and some detailed description. These elements, however, are not always functionally integrated. This lack of integration, plus the length of the selection and the lack of adequate dramatic focus prevent these pieces from being short stories. A well-structured story usually renders the significant incidents in dramatic detail while other events and feelings are summarized. But in these "tales" Irving tends to



talk on and on, often summarizing when he should be dramatizing and usually giving equal emphasis to a long string of events. "Annette Delarbre," "The Student of Salamanca," "Legend of the Arabian Astrologer," and "The Devil and Tom Walker" all can be classified as tales.

"Annette Delarbre" is one of the four selections in Bracebridge Hall not narrated by Crayon, but rather is written by a parson and presented by Lady Lillycraft. It is a sentimental tale of a beautiful French girl who has a tender heart, but lacks self-control. Eugene, a young soldier, falls in love with her and Annette delights in exercising her power over him. One night after she pays considerable attention to her other admirers, she quarrels with Eugene and he goes off to sea. "This was the first stroke of real anguish that Annette had ever received, and it over came her" (p. 314). When his ship returns, she learns that Eugene has been washed overboard. She collapses and "it was months before she recovered her health" (p. 317). For a year she is subject to periodic fits of melancholy. Eventually "her cheerful intervals became shorter and less frequent, and attended with more incoherency" (p. 321). About this time Eugene returns explaining that he had not drowned but had managed to swim ashore and waited "for the sailing of a ship to return home" (p. 322). With considerable planning the news of Eugene's return is conveyed to Annette and though



she recognizes him at once, later she "relapsed into a wild and unsettled state of mind" (p. 326). Eventually she recovers and marries Eugene.

The tale is divided into two parts. The first section takes place after Eugene is apparently lost at sea. The narrator first sees Annette during a tour of Lower Normandy. While watching a rural fair he notices the beautiful girl "who passed through the crowd without seeming to take any interest in their amusements" (p. 308). He is told her story by a priest who explains the reason for her sadness. When the girl leaves the chapel, the parson shares his thoughts with the reader.

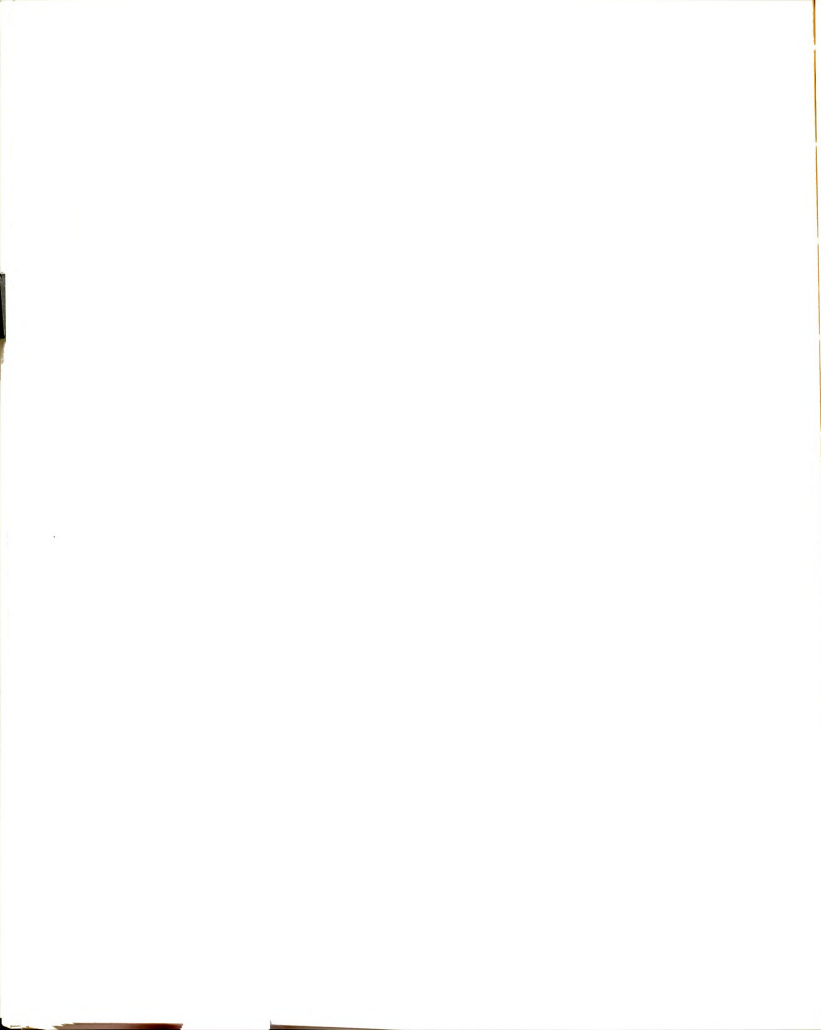
"Heaven," thought I, "has ever its store of balms for the hurt mind and wounded spirit, and may in time rear up this broken flower to be once more the pride and joy of the valley. The very delusion in which the poor girl walks may be one of those mists kindly diffused by Providence over the regions of thought, when they become too fruitful of misery. (pp. 320-21)

The second part of the tale takes place a year later when the parson again visits Honfleur and seeks out the priest who told him the story. This time he learns of Eugene's return and Annette's subsequent recovery. The tale is, thus, twice removed from the reader, since the narrator hears the plot from another narrator. Though this device does lend a kind of historical realism to the tale, it robs it of dramatic realism. We never get close enough to Annette to participate in her emotional struggle. Much of her early caprice and

later despair is either presented in a detached way or summarized for us by the narrator. The parson's narrative presence is strongly felt. As in the previously discussed sketch "The Wife," the voice of the narrator stands between the reader and the action, filtering and summarizing the drama for the reader. Though any story or tale may include some summarizing, dramatic focus is also needed to emphasize crucial scenes of action or characterization. While it is acceptable to summarize Annette's early caprices, the tale would convey a greater impact if her reaction to Eugene's departure were rendered in more dramatic detail. But instead of involving us directly in Annette's emotional conflict, the parson merely tells us her reaction:

The vivacity of her spirits were apt to hurry her to extremes; she for a time gave way to ungovernable transports of affliction and remorse, and manifested, in the violence of her grief, the real ardor of her affection. (p. 314)

This sort of detached "telling" in summary form goes on for several paragraphs, first by the parson and then by the priest. There is almost no attempt to create tension. Instead a kind of even-stepped movement from one event to the next occurs, the most effective focus occurring at the end of the first part when the parson observes Annette entering and leaving the chapel. Here he "paints" the scene in close detail, mixing in his own sentimental



reactions. His articulated thoughts are perhaps more dramatically effective than anything that has happened to Annette.

The second part of the tale also fails to effectively dramatize the central event, Annette's reunion with Eugene. Though some of her comments are scattered here and there, the actual moment of meeting is summarized in one or two sentences.

The next morning the same theme was resumed. She was dressed out to receive her lover. Every bosom fluttered with anxiety. A cabriolet drove into the village. "Eugene is coming!" was the cry. She saw him alight at the door, and rushed with a shriek into his arms. (p. 325)

Her immediate reaction to the reunion is also summarized for us.

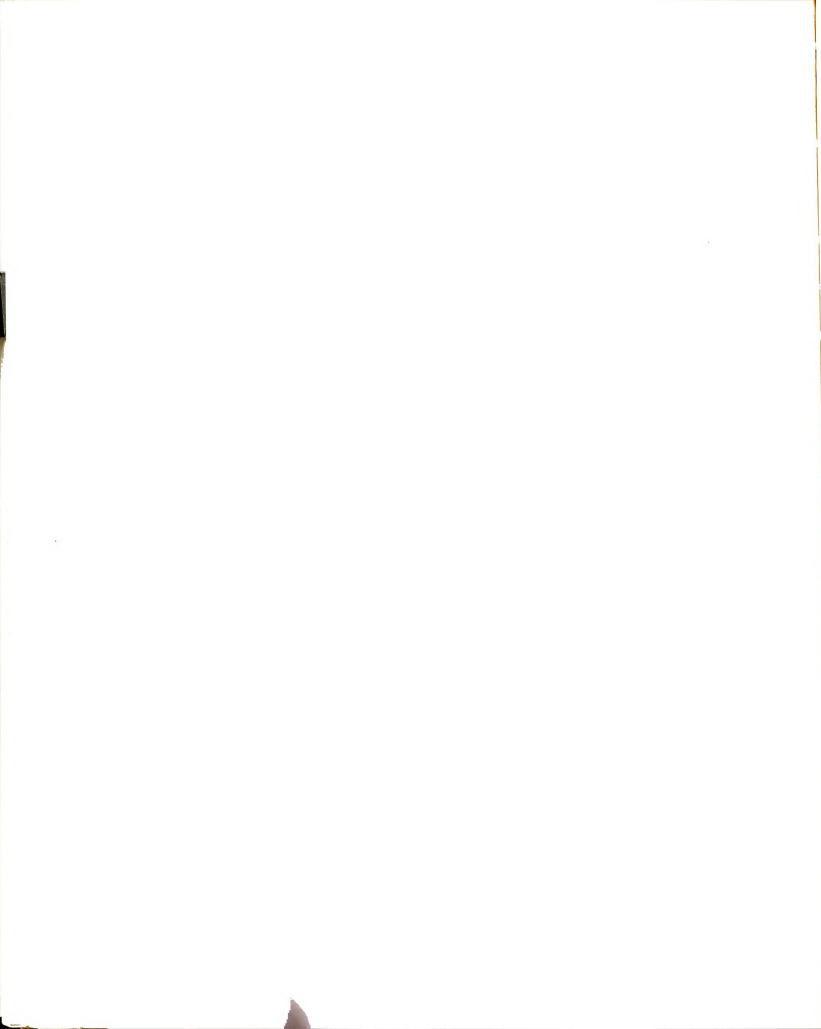
Her friends trembled for the result of this critical experiment; but she did not sink under it, for her fancy had prepared her for his return. She was as one in a dream, to whom a tide of unlooked-for prosperity, that would have overwhelmed his waking reason, seems but the natural current of circumstances. (p. 325)

And the story marches relentlessly on in a steady, even process broken only by a few lines of isolated dialogue.

In a sense what we have in "Annette Delarbre" is a combination story-sketch, neither of which is completely successful. The actual history of Annette has a plot with a conflict and a resolution. The central character undergoes an internal struggle and changes her behavior and attitude. None of this is dramatically or realistically portrayed, however. Instead the narrator's

reaction to her story is more immediately convincing for the reader. The use of setting, the point of view, and the organization draw attention to the narrator rather than to the plot of the tale. Even the plot does more to reveal the narrator than it does to reveal Annette. Yet the plot is too lengthy and independent to be viewed simply as a means of revealing the character and perceptions of the narrator. As a result the selection fails to functionally integrate its elements and thus, it fails to become a short story.

"The Student of Salamanca" (Bracebridge Hall) is a long tale of love, mystery, and abduction. The first half of the tale is devoted to Antonio de Castros who becomes fascinated with an alchemist, Felix de Vasques, and then falls in love with the alchemist's daughter, Inez. Although he is somewhat interested in helping with Felix's experiments, Antonio's main interest is in the pursuit of Inez. In the course of their courtship, Inez is accosted by a stranger whom we later discover is Don Ambrosio de Loxa, one of the "most determined and dangerous libertines in all Granada" (p. 187). Antonio rescues her, however. A few days later while walking in one of the gardens of Granada, he declares his love for her and she listens with "humid gleam" in her eyes "that showed her heart was with him" (p. 194). Immediately afterward they watch a group of Andalusian



dancers, one of whom sings a song of warning which was "pointed and startling" (p. 195). That night after he has left Inez, Antonio is kidnapped.

The second half of the tale is devoted to Inez, her father and Don Ambrosio. Antonio is not present again until the final scene. After Antonio's disappearance, Felix too is kidnapped and imprisoned for practicing alchemy. Then Inez is captured by Don Ambrosio who wants to seduce her. Considerable attention is given to Don Felix's treatment in jail and to his trial at which he delivers a lengthy speech in defense of alchemy. Nevertheless he is sentenced to death.

Inez, who has resisted Don Ambrosio's advances, finds out about her father's circumstances from the singer, but her pleas to Ambrosio are futile. The final incident of the tale is drawn in some detail. At dawn on the day of the execution Inez is awakened by the appearance of the ballad singer who identifies herself as one of Ambrosio's former victims, and helps Inez to escape. Pursued by Don Ambrosio, they hasten to the place of execution. Inez makes her way through the throng to her father's side. Don Ambrosio appears and attempts to recapture her, but she is once again rescued by Antonio who also frees her father. Once the excitement is over, Inez learns (and the reader too learns for the first time) that Antonio is really a nobleman in

disguise (the "only son and heir of a powerful grandee of Valencia" p. 231). The piece ends, predictably enough, with Don Ambrosio disgraced, Inez and Antonio married, and Felix living happily with his children.

In some ways "The Student of Salamanca" has more of the characteristics of a successful short story than "Annette Delarbre." To begin with, the narrator is not physically present in the story. There is, also, little evidence of editorializing by the narrator. Occasionally, he does include his personal opinion, as is illustrated in the description of the loneliness of Inez after Antonio has been kidnapped.

She had never before felt what it was to be really lonely. She now was conscious of the force of that attachment which had taken possession of her breast; for never do we know how much we love, never do we know how necessary the object of our love is to our happiness, until we experience the weary void of separation. (p. 197)

Such comments are commonly made by Irving's narrators. There are other instances when the narrator's opinion intrudes in "The Student of Salamanca" such as his comment that "love is a troublesome companion in a study at the best of times" (p. 178), and his references to the past glory of the Alhambra. But these are minor and for the most part the direct influence of the narrator is minimal. The tale of Antonio, unlike the tale of Annette, is relatively free from narrator intrusion.

Like many of Irving's tales, "The Student of Salamanca" includes an excessive amount of summarizing of actions, feelings, and emotional conflicts. For example, the scene in which Antonio declares his love for Inez is described in a detached manner:

It was then that Antonio first ventured to breathe his passion, and to express by words what his eyes had long since so eloquently revealed. He made his avowal with fervor but with frankness. He had no gay prospects to hold out: he was a poor scholar, dependent on his "good spirits to feed and clothe him." (p. 194)

Since the first half of the story is primarily concerned with the love affair, it is somewhat disappointing that there is so little attempt either to build tension toward this scene or to dramatize it.

What does help to relieve the lengthy summarized statements of events is the frequent use of scattered lines of dialogue. These direct quotations are scattered among the detached summaries in such a way as to lend some immediacy to the events. After Antonio sees the cavalier (who later turns out to be Don Ambrosio) serenading Inez, we are told that her behavior to Antonio is

. . . reserved and distant. Now that the common cares of the sick-room were at an end, he saw little more of her than before his admission to the house. (p. 176)

This summary of Inez's behavior is followed by a paragraph of direct quotation in which Antonio expresses his reaction to Inez.

"Tis plain," thought Antonio, "my presence is indifferent, if not irksome to her. She has noticed my admiration, and is determined to discourage it; nothing but a feeling of gratitude prevents her treating me with marked distaste--and then has she not another lover, rich, gallant, splendid, musical?" (p. 176)

Other incidences of dialogue occur between Inez and Ambrosio after her capture. And some of the speeches are quoted at length. Many times, however, only a line or two is quoted. When Antonio urges Inez and her father to seek refuge in Valencia, he is quoted directly. Sometimes in response to Felix's extended rambling about alchemy, Antonio's thoughts are quoted in a line or two.

Some direct quotation is used, in fact, in almost all of the eleven specific incidents of the tale. After the fire Felix speaks with his daughter; when her father is kidnapped, Inez speaks with the strangers who appear; there is conversation at Felix's trial between Inez and Don Ambrosio, and between Inez and the ballad singer. In these incidents the setting is used to reinforce the mood and add some realism to the scene. When Antonio first follows Don Felix home, both the time of night and the description of the house contribute an air of mystery. The house of Don Felix has the trappings of a gothic mansion.

It appeared to be a mere wing, or ruined fragment, of what had once been a pile of some consequence. The walls were of great thickness, the windows narrow, and generally secured by iron bars. The

door was of planks, studded with iron spikes, and had been of great strength, though at present much decayed. At one end of the mansion was a ruinous tower, in the Moorish style of architecture. (p. 158)

Such detailed attention to the surroundings adds realism and immediacy to the incident.

Perhaps the most dramatic incident in the tale is the final scene which begins at dawn on the execution day when Inez is awakened by the appearance of the ballad singer. She identifies herself as one of Don Ambrosio's former "conquests," and helps Inez escape. The tension of the scene mounts as the women are reminded of the execution.

While she was yet speaking, the sun rose in all its splendor; first lighting up the mountain summits, then stealing down height by height, until its rays gilded the domes and towers of Grenada, which they could partially see from between the trees, below them. Just then the heavy tones of a bell came sounding from a distance, echoing, in sullen clang, along the mountain. Inez turned pale at the sound. (p. 223)

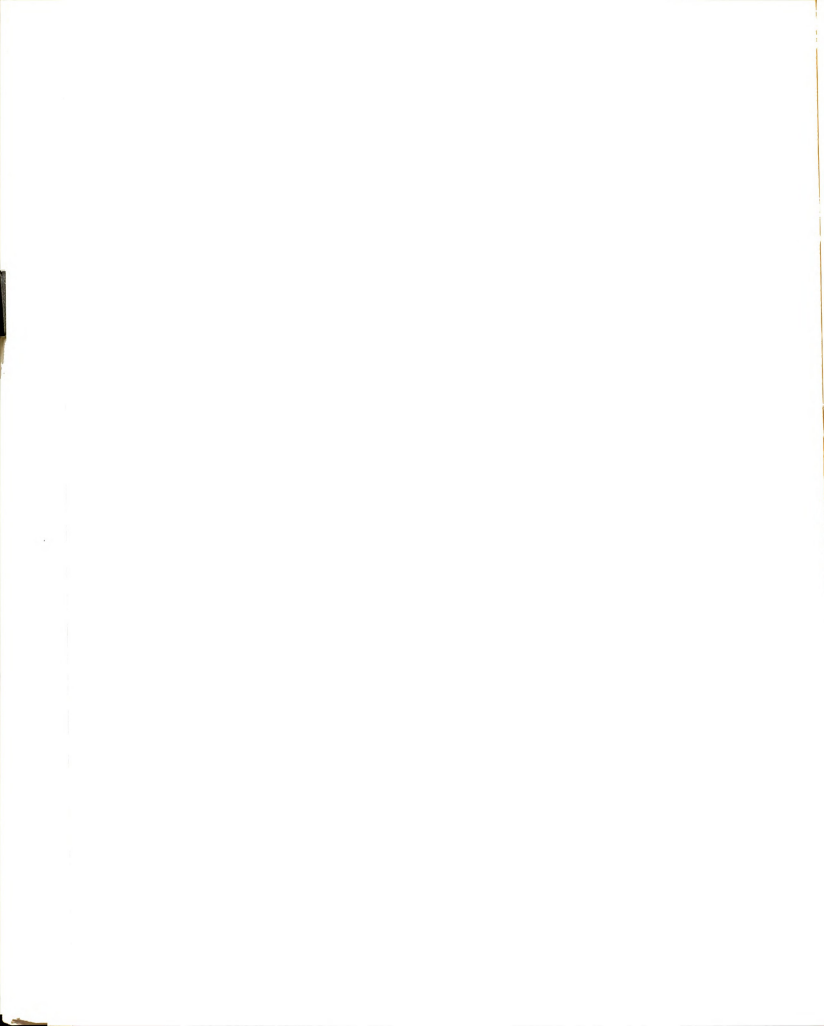
The tension continues to mount as Don Felix is paraded through the streets on his death journey. The interference of Don Ambrosio and the resulting fight is described in a kind of mixture of dialogue and summary.

"Let go your hold, villain!" cried a voice from among the crowd, and Antonio was seen eagerly tearing his way through the press of people.

"Seize him! seize him!" cried Don Ambrosio to the familiars; "'tis an accomplice of the sorcerer's."

"Liar!" retorted Antonio, as he thrust the mob to the right and left, and forced himself to the spot.

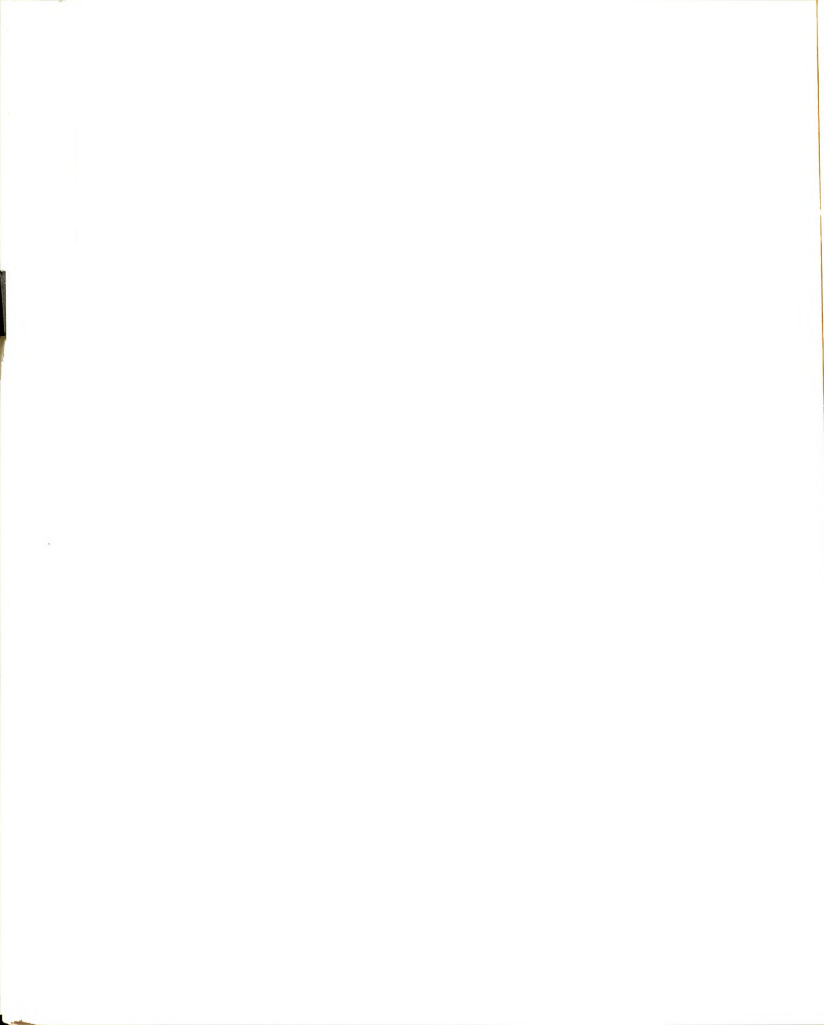
The sword of Don Ambrosio flashed in an instant from the scabbard; the student was armed, and equally



alert. There was a fierce clash of weapons; the crowd made way for them as they fought, and closed again, so as to hide them from the view of Inez. All was tumult and confusion for a moment; when there was a kind of shout from the spectators, and the mob again opening, she beheld, as she thought, Antonio weltering in his blood. (p. 230)

This scene, the climatic moment of the tale, combines the immediacy of direct dialogue with the detached narrative view of the ensuing fight. The crucial moments of the conflict, however, are narrated as they are viewed by Inez. Her mistaken assumption that Antonio has been defeated is the only information given to the reader and thus some tension is maintained until a few paragraphs later when we learn that it is Don Ambrosio who has been defeated.

In spite of the dramatic detail in some of the incidents, however, the tale lacks a central emphasis or focus. We move from one incident to another with a kind of evenness that at times becomes tedious. Part of the difficulty is the lack of character development, for like most of Irving's weaker stories "The Student of Salamanca" is plot-dominated. The external plot does manage to hold our interest, but there is little evidence of internal conflict or development in any of the characters. The scenes which are best suited to reveal an internal character conflict or tension are not dramatized for us. Instead, we are "told" about the character's feelings and his behavior. In the previously quoted scene when



Antonio declares his love to Inez, there is no attempt to characterize his internal hesitation or his anticipation of her response. Nor are we allowed to participate in the drama of the moment. We are not even allowed to share his reaction when Inez accepts him. In fact, no mention is made of his pleasure or satisfaction or relief.

Later, when Inez learns of her father's imprisonment, another opportunity to reveal internal conflict is unrealized. We are told of her reaction and behavior rather than being allowed to share her emotional anguish.

The brain of Inez reeled as she read this dreadful scroll. She was less filled with alarm at her own danger, than horror at her father's situation. She was not to be pacified; her fears were too much aroused to be trifled with. She declared her knowledge of her father's being a prisoner of the inquisition, and reiterated her frantic supplications that he would save him. (p. 217)

In the scene which follows Inez becomes fully aware of Don Ambrosio's intentions and her predicament, but we are not allowed to share her pain. Instead of focusing on the difficulty of deciding whether or not to give in to Don Ambrosio to save her father, we are told only that "she broke forth into exclamations of the most frantic agony" and that "the perfidious Ambrosio saw the torture of her soul, and anticipated from it a triumph" (p. 218).

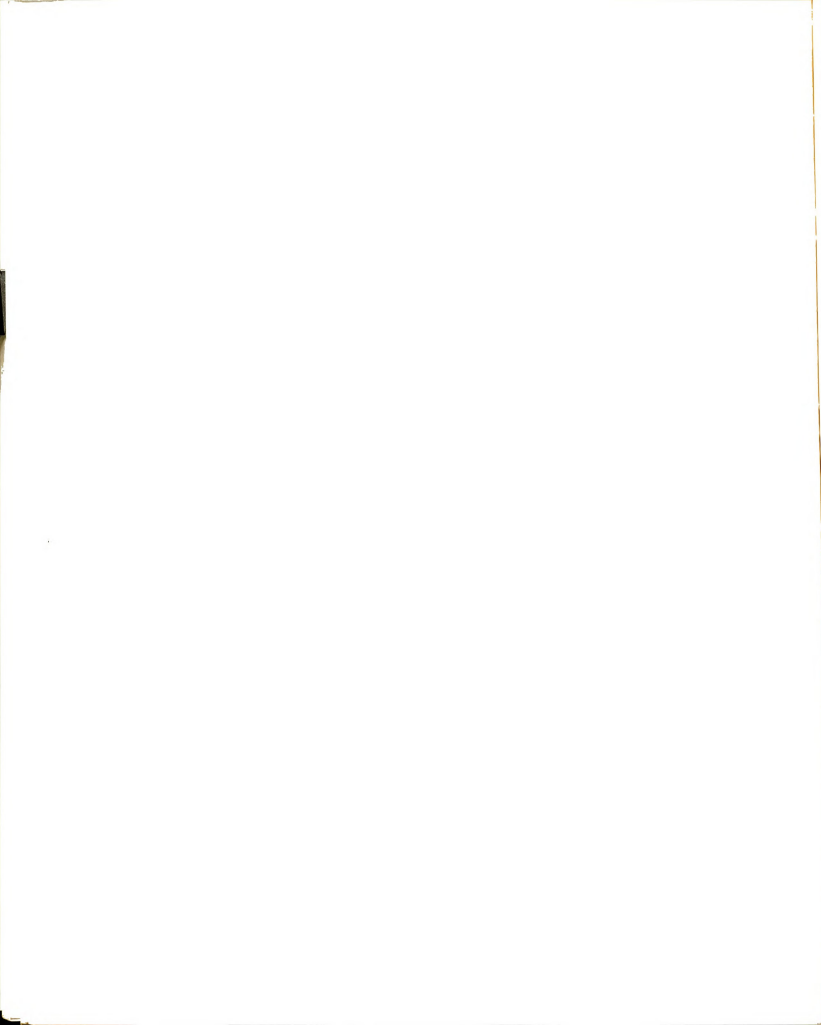
Though each of the characters is subjected to a trial, none of the characters really changes. The father succumbs to defeat after the trial; Inez becomes temporarily self-assertive in response to Ambrosio; Ambrosio

confesses his crimes; and Antonio reveals his true identity, but none of these changes are dealt with in detail. The sufferings of the characters are not a result of their own shortcomings, nor do they arrive at any self-perception. Their conflicts, rather, are arbitrarily established, external conflicts.

In addition it is difficult to determine who is the central character. Antonio dominates the first half of the narrative which tends to view events from the student's point of view. In the second half, the tale is presented from a more omniscient point of view and Felix, Inez, and Ambrosio share the focus. Some scenes are rendered from Felix's viewpoint, others from the perspective of Inez.

The multiplicity of plot line and the diffuseness in characterization, combined with the length of the tale help support the likelihood that "The Student of Salamanca" is more of an abortive novel than a short story. Unfortunately, the piece lacks both the conciseness and focus of a short story and the polish and continuity which would make it an effective novel.

The lack of continuity is apparent in the poorly integrated plot and the failure to clarify the thematic significance of events. The love affair between Antonio and Inez is apparently the most important aspect of the first half of the story. Yet, though there is a plot



connection, the love story is never clearly related thematically to Felix's imprisonment or trial. And, though the parallel trials of Inez and Don Felix contribute a formal unity to the story, it is never clearly established why either of them should be tested. The defense of alchemy adds a socio-historical dimension to the tale, but it receives a disproportionate amount of attention. On the other hand, without the discussion of alchemy, the tale is reduced to a sentimental love/adventure story with the tritest of themes.

Perhaps the most glaring technical weakness in "The Student of Salamanca" is the revelation of Antonio's true identity. As if by magic he becomes the "only son and heir of a powerful grandee of Valencia" (p. 231) who had abandoned his studies at the university and "had remained incognito for a time at Grenada, until, by further study and self-regulation, he could prepare himself to return home with credit, and atone for his transgressions against paternal authority" (p. 232). In a series of brief paragraphs we are informed of his background and motivation. Revealing Antonio's true identity at the beginning of the story would have offered an opportunity to delineate his character development, but such a development is sacrificed for what turns out to be too convenient an unmasking of his

identity. Unlike Dolph Heyliger, who learns and earns his true identity, Antonio is mechanically unveiled.

It is difficult to speculate about the personal qualities which prevented Irving from successfully dramatizing "Annette Delarbre" and "The Student of Salamanca." He seldom, even in his notes and journals, delved deeply into his own emotional struggles, and more than one critic has noted the absence of personal confession in Irving's writings.¹ Perhaps his discomfort in dwelling on his own inner struggles prevented him from the psychological exploration of his fictional characters; perhaps his reticence to intimately involve himself with others prevented him from dramatizing such involvements on paper. Or perhaps his concern with the moral and philosophical aspects of his writing at times overshadowed the formal qualities of a selection. The latter possibility might explain why he devoted so much time to the defense of alchemy in "The Student of Salamanca."

That Irving was concerned with the moral of his fiction is apparent in the opening selection of Tales of a Traveller.

As I know this to be a story-telling and a story-reading age, and that the world is fond of being taught by apologue, I have digested the instruction I would convey into a number of tales. They may not possess the power of amusement, which the tales

¹Washington Irving, Notes While Preparing Sketch Book, ed. Stanley T. Williams (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), p. 24.

told by many of my contemporaries possess; but then I value myself on the sound moral which each of them contains. This may not be apparent at first, but the reader will be sure to find it out in the end. I am for curing the world by gentle alternatives, not by violent doses; indeed, the patient should never be conscious that he is taking a dose. (p. ix)

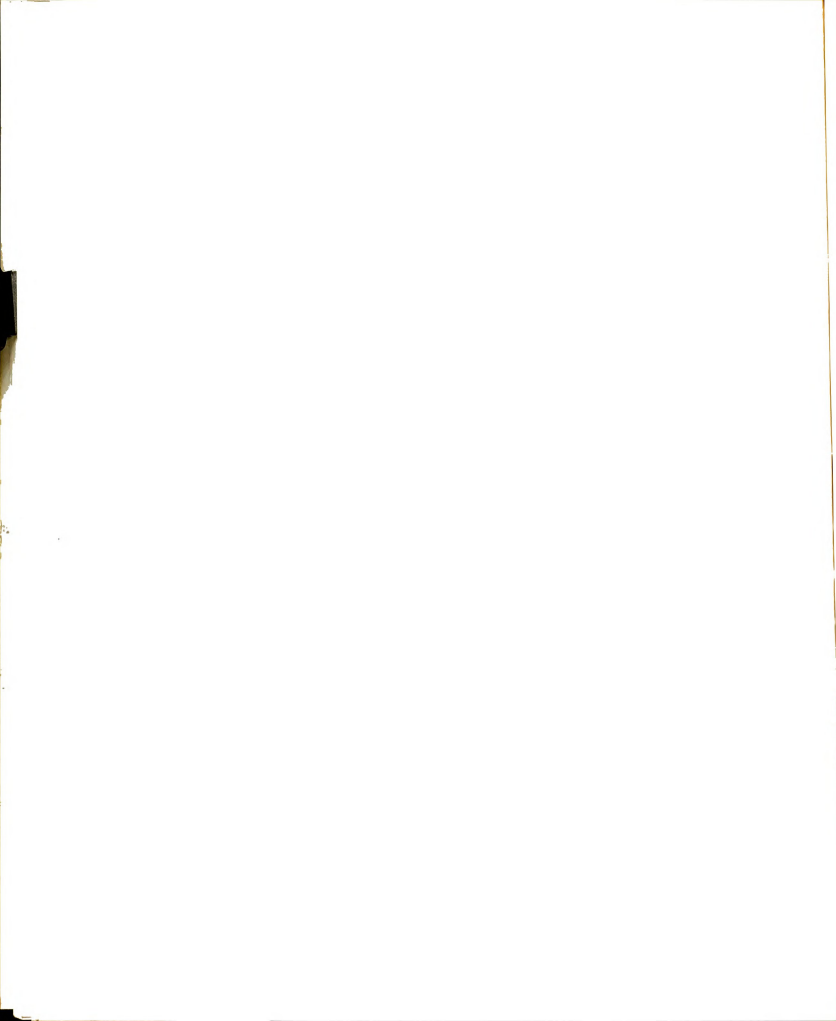
The skill with which Irving imbeds his moral in a tale undoubtedly contributes significantly to the success of the selection. In each of the next two tales discussed, the moral is implied by the ironic narrative voice. Though the moral is perhaps at times too obvious in both these tales, the narrative control does make "Legend of the Arabian Astrologer" and "The Devil and Tom Walker" more successful as tales than either "Annette Delarbre" or "The Student of Salamanca."

The "Legend of the Arabian Astrologer" is one of the most skillfully written tales in The Alhambra. It is interesting that though he relates it, Irving is not physically present in the tale as he is in most of the selections in The Alhambra. The plot is relatively complicated. Aben Habuz, a Moorish king and "retired conqueror" is not allowed to relax in his retirement for he is surrounded on all sides by hostile neighbors. In the midst of his harrassment, Ibrahim, an Arabian physician and astrologer, who is said to have found the "secret of prolonging life," arrives at Aben's court and is taken into the King's confidence. Ibrahim offers to make Aben a magic talisman to detect invaders and in



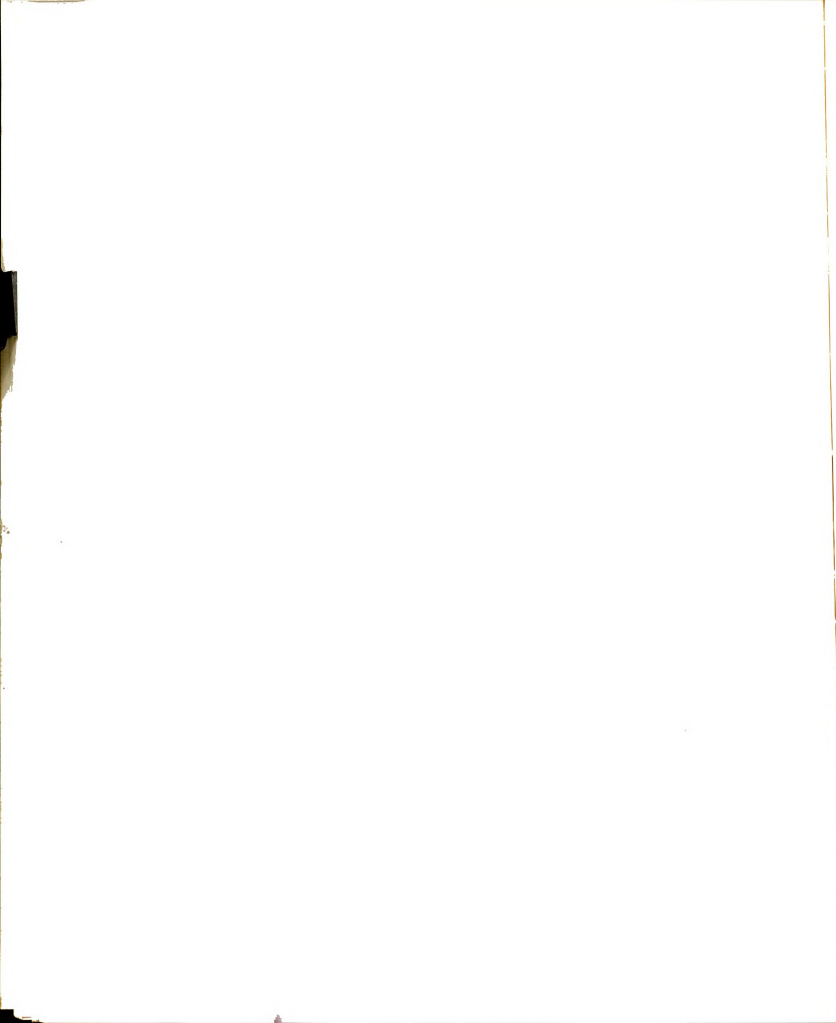
return Aben promises Ibrahim a generous reward. Ibrahim builds a tower on which he puts a "bronze figure of a Moorish horseman, fixed on a pivot, with a shield on one arm, and his lance elevated perpendicularly" (p. 174). In the tower he arranges in chess-board fashion four mimic armies--one for each direction seen from the tower--and the "effigy of the potentate that ruled in that direction" (p. 173). When the next army invades Aben's territory, the talisman turns in its direction and Aben is led to the tower by Ibrahim and shown the army replicas. Aben is told he can cause the army to retreat without loss of bloodshed, or with "bloody feud and carnage" (p. 175) and, forgetting that he is "the most pacific of monarchs," Aben nearly exterminates his foe by striking the effigies with the point of a magic lance. When his scouts tell him that the army has indeed made a bloody retreat, Aben profusely thanks Ibrahim, and offers him whatever reward he wishes. Claiming he is an old man with simple tastes, Ibrahim asks to have his cave lavishly decorated to suit his tastes--complete with dancing girls.

A major conflict between Ibrahim and Aben arises later when the talisman turns to indicate not an invading army but a Christian damsel who has wandered into Aben's kingdom. Both men desire her, but Aben claims her as his. She, however, has a magic lyre with which she wards off his passion by charming him to sleep. Later,



after an internal insurrection, Ibrahim offers to build Aben a retreat from the world--a magic garden and palace--in return for the "first beast of burden, with its load, which shall enter the magic portal of the palace" (p. 184). Aben agrees, and, of course, when the garden and palace are completed, it is the damsel riding on her horse which first enters the garden. When Ibrahim claims her as his, Aben violently protests. The argument ends abruptly, however, when Ibrahim, "smote the earth with his staff, and sank with the Gothic princess through the centre of the barbican" (p. 187). And though one day a peasant reported to have looked down a fissure in the rock, "into a subterranean hall, in which sat the astrologer, on a magnificent divan, slumbering and nodding to the silver lyre of the princess, which seemed to hold a magic sway over his senses" (p. 188), Aben never saw the two of them again.

The character of Aben Habuz is given some depth in this tale, though what complexity he has is of an ironic nature. The narrative voice of the selection carefully points out the ironic contrast between Aben's claimed pacificity and his warlike, violent inclinations. The irony first becomes apparent when, once the talisman is made, Aben becomes impatient to test it, and longs "as ardently for an invasion as he had ever sighed after repose" (p. 174). His inner desires for violence are



exposed most dramatically during the next invasion. Given the choice of defeating the invaders without loss of life or with bloodshed, Aben chooses the latter.

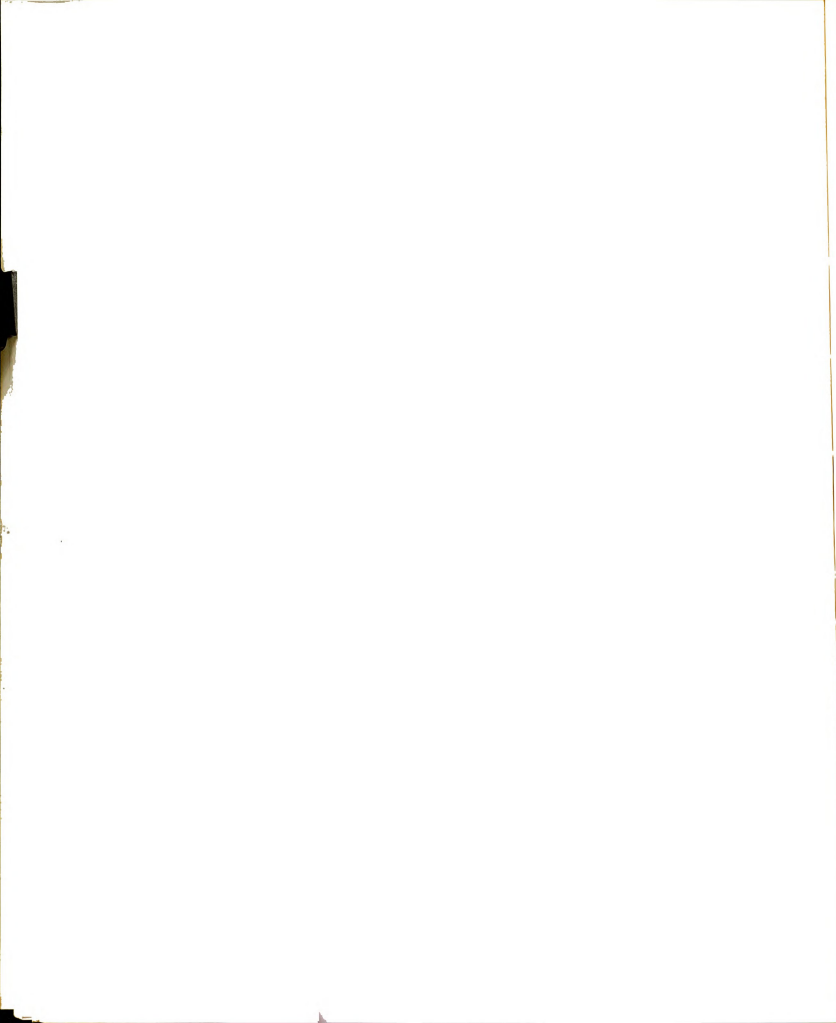
A livid streak passed across the countenance of Aben Habuz; he seized the lance with trembling eagerness; his gray beard wagged with exultation as he tottered toward the table: "Son of Abu Ayub," exclaimed he, in chuckling tone, "I think we will have a little blood!" (p. 175)

Later the narrative voice reinforces the irony by asserting that "it was with difficulty the astrologer could stay the hand of the most pacific of monarchs and prevent him from absolutely exterminating his foes" (p. 175). Aben's lack of self-perception--or at least his unwillingness to acknowledge his own behavior--is reemphasized shortly after the battle:

"At length," said he, "I shall lead a life of tranquillity, and have all my enemies in my power." (p. 176)

His tranquil life, however, consists of conducting one bloody campaign after another. "The pacific Aben Habuz carried on furious campaigns in effigy in his tower" (p. 177).

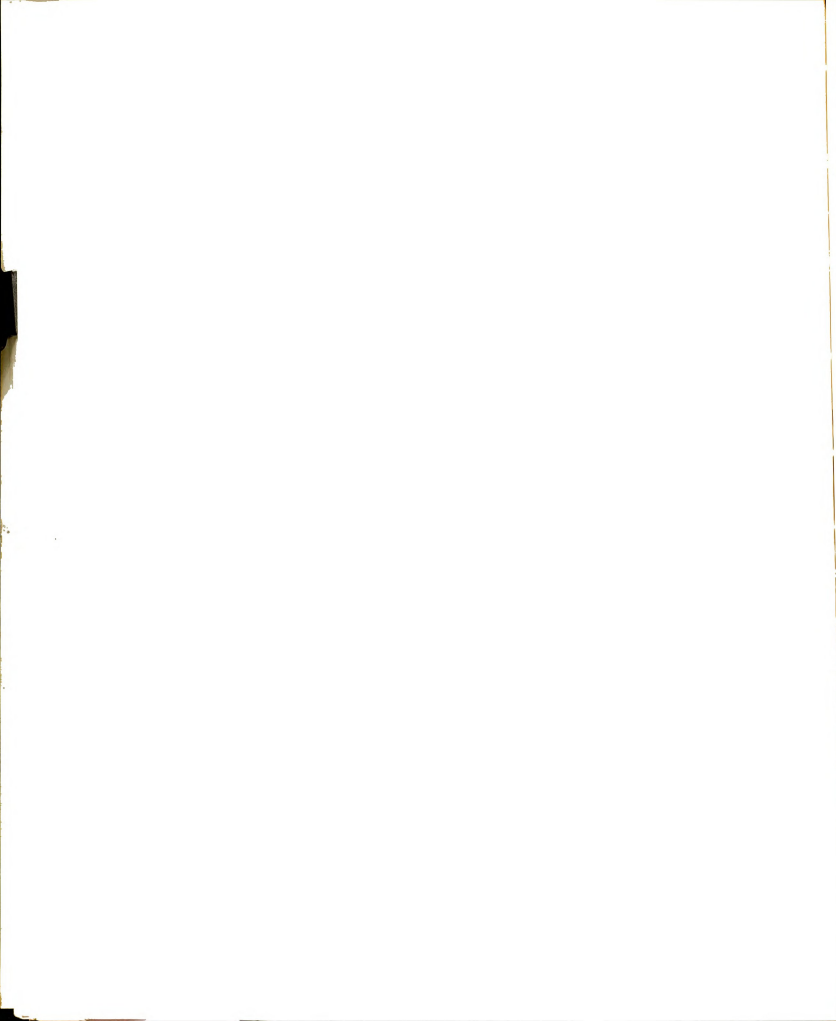
Aben's lack of self-perception contributes, of course, to his inability to assess the character of Ibrahim, who, in fact, possesses a similar duality of character, but who is aware of what he is doing. Like Aben, Ibrahim makes claims about himself which prove to be untrue. Ibrahim repeatedly asserts that his needs are "few" and "simple" and that he is "easily" satisfied.



Yet his behavior demonstrates that just the opposite is true--though not until it is too late does Aben realize this. When Ibrahim asks to have his cave fitted "as a suitable hermitage" in reward for the talisman, Aben is "secretly pleased at the cheapness of the recompense." But it does not turn out to be an inexpensive endeavor, and Aben's treasurer "groaned at the sums daily demanded to fit up this hermitage" (p. 177). And when it is finally finished, Ibrahim asks in addition for "a few dancing women." Yet Aben keeps his promise and grants Ibrahim all his wishes.

When the Gothic princess appears, and Aben and the astrologer quarrel over her, Aben asserts his knowledge in the "ways of women." Ibrahim asserts his ability to counter her magic charms. Yet in the end neither of them gain power over her. The sound of her silver lyre holds a magic power over both of them.

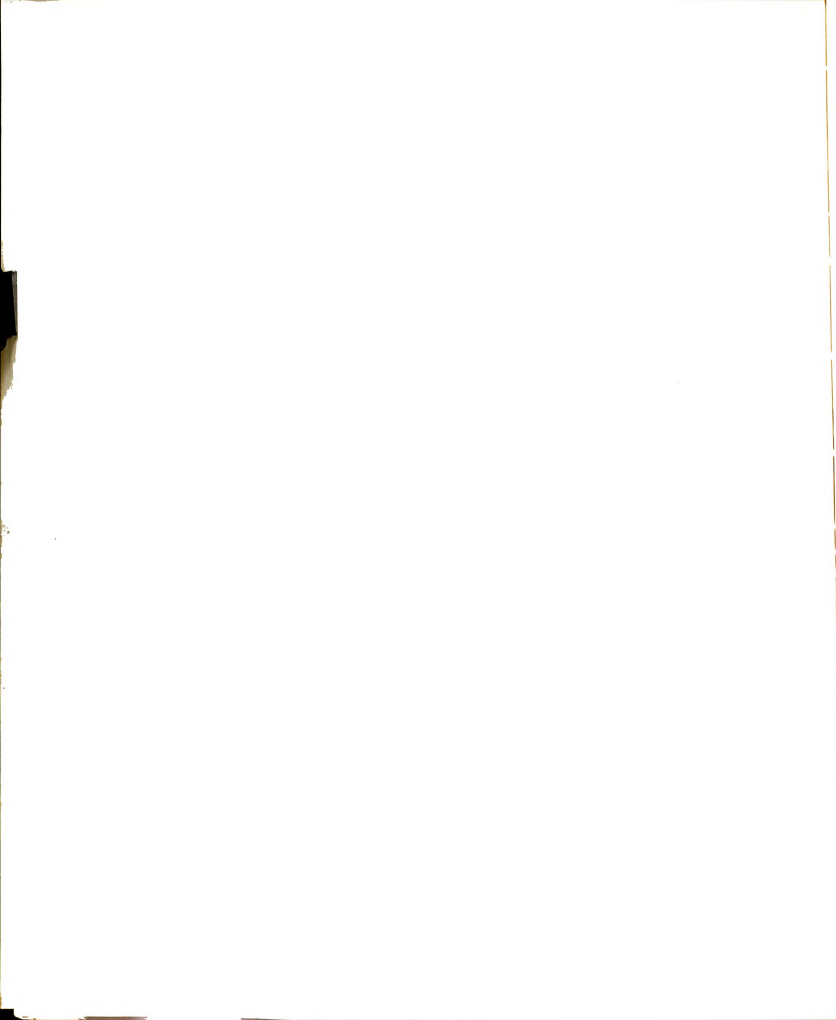
Aben, then, is not able to accurately perceive either himself, or the Princess or Ibrahim. He is not even aware of the dangers of Ibrahim's magic abilities, and enters quite blandly into the second agreement with Ibrahim, never suspecting the possible consequences of promising the first beast of burden and its load as a reward. Nor does he appear to be aware of his own duplicity when he asserts:



I care not for grandeur, I care not for power, I languish only for repose; would that I had some quiet retreat where I might take refuge from the world, and all its cares, and pomps, and troubles, and devote the remainder of my days to tranquillity and love. (p. 182)

Given his similar claim of desiring peace early in the selection, we are now less likely to believe him--though Aben himself seems unaware of the irony of his own behavior. Aben's lack of self-perception is underscored by his inability to accurately assess Ibrahim's character. Aben never questions Ibrahim's claims to be easily satisfied. Even after several encounters with Ibrahim's lavish tastes, Aben is never suspicious; instead he accepts Ibrahim's assertion that he is "an old man and a philosopher, and easily satisfied" (p. 148).

Aben, thus, can be considered a victim of his own ignorance--he neither perceives himself nor Ibrahim clearly. He continually misjudges the astrologer and his powers. When the princess mounted on her palfrey enters the portal of the magic palace, and Ibrahim claims her as his reward, Aben smiles "at what he considered a pleasantry of the ancient man." By this time Aben should know better. But even when he realizes that Ibrahim is serious, the king's anger is directed ineffectually at the astrologer. Aben simply is not aware of his incapacity to deal successfully either with the princess or the astrologer. The monarch's defeat is further emphasized when he learns that even the charm of the

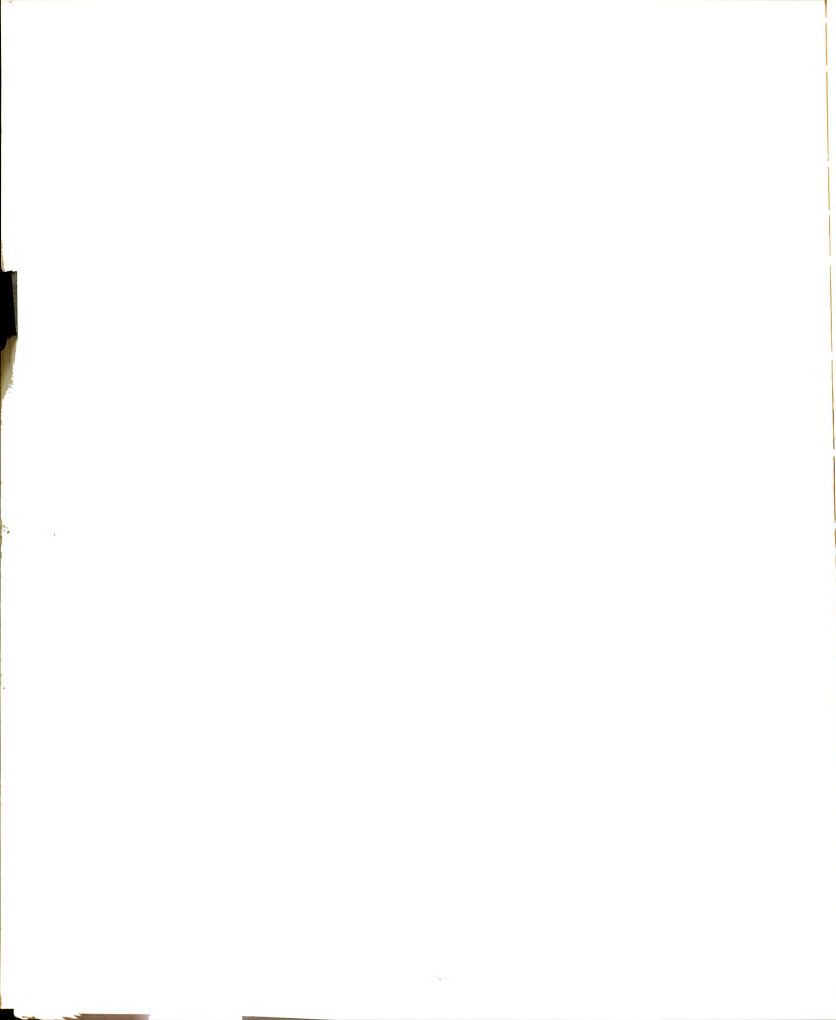


talisman fails and "the remainder of the life of the most pacific of monarchs was a tissue of turmoils" (p. 188).

The tale, as a whole, is quite skillfully handled. Thematically, the use of contrasts and parallels contributes effectively to the tension and conflict of the plot. For example, when he offers to build the garden for Aben, Ibrahim tells a story about King Sheddad, which is a tale within the tale. The story of Sheddad, who is punished for his "pride and arrogance" by being "swept from the earth" (p. 183), acts as a kind of foreshadowing of both Aben's and Ibrahim's fate. About Sheddad we are told that "the curse of heaven fell on him for his presumption" (p. 183). The reader is thus prepared for what happens to Aben. The tension increases as we anticipate his fate. For Aben too is presumptuous; he assumes that because he is king, he is invulnerable. In his anger at Ibrahim's claim, Aben cries:

"Base son of the desert," . . . "thou may'st be master of many arts, but know me for thy master, and presume not to juggle with thy king." (p. 187)

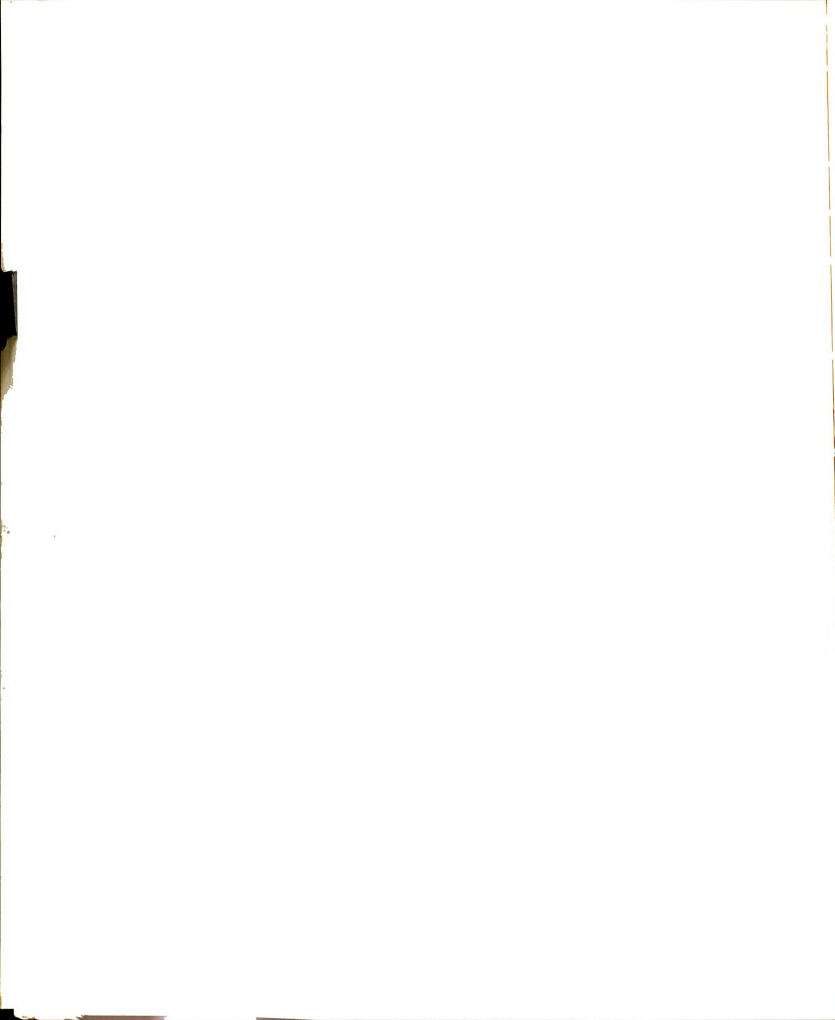
Ibrahim, of course, scoffs at the king and disappears with the princess. Even Ibrahim's triumph is short-lived, however. His presumption is countered by the damsel, who according to the peasant's report still charms Ibrahim to sleep in the underground chamber.



Despite the thematic concerns, however, this tale, like the previous two, is plot-dominated. The conflict is heavily emphasized and though Aben and Ibrahim are not flat characters, they undergo little, if any, development. Aben does not learn from his mistakes nor does he achieve any new perception. Ibrahim is shown to have little, if any, internal conflict and the princess, of course, is purely one dimensional. It is in fact, somewhat amusing that she is the one in power in the end.

Even the dialogue is subordinated to the plot. The dialogue and the specific details add a sense of immediacy, and contribute, at times, to the concrete reality of the tale--even revealing character to some extent. Yet for the most part, the dialogue is used simply to advance the plot or to intensify the conflict.

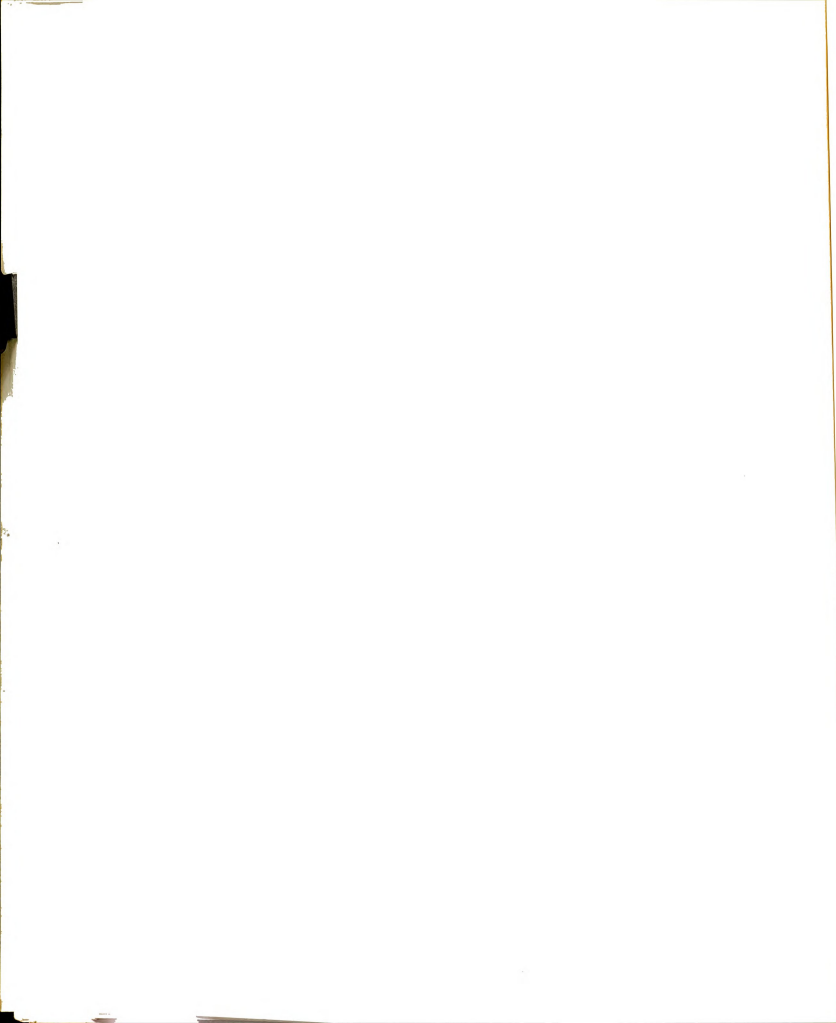
The plot, though less episodic than many of the legends in The Alhambra, is not cohesively unified. The Gothic princess, for example, is not dramatically or thematically integrated with the rest of the story. She serves to illuminate the folly of the two old men who fight to possess her. Yet the source of her power is never made clear. She might be interpreted as the representation of youth, beauty, or desire--all of which can charm and thus have power over age, power, cunning, or experience. But the tale does not really develop



this idea clearly and the Gothic princess functions simply as a beautiful, proud, self-composed, and unmoveable, unemotional damsel. She does not win her freedom, but neither is she vanquished.

The "Legend of the Arabian Astrologer" is structurally better unified than either "The Student of Salamanca" or "Annette Delarbre." Some elements detract from the unity--the title as well as Ibrahim's magical powers make us wonder if he is the central character. But we learn more about the inner character of Aben; we see his inconsistencies and his conflicts. The focus on his character is one of the central unifying elements of the selection.

The technical skill evident in the "Legend of the Arabian Astrologer" is surpassed in "The Devil and Tom Walker." Of the four selections discussed in this chapter "The Devil and Tom Walker" comes closest to being a successful short story. It is included in the selections of Part IV of Tales of a Traveller and is supposed to be "found among the papers of the Late Diedrich Knickerbocker." In this final part of the volume, Knickerbocker describes a fishing party of several men, one of whom, a Cape Cod whaler, tells the tale of Tom Walker. He tells his companions that the tale was "written by a neighbor of mine" (p. 390) and he had learned it by heart. The narrator is thus, thrice



removed from the reader and, in fact, there is little evidence of the narrator's physical presence in the tale.

Tom is unquestionably the central character.

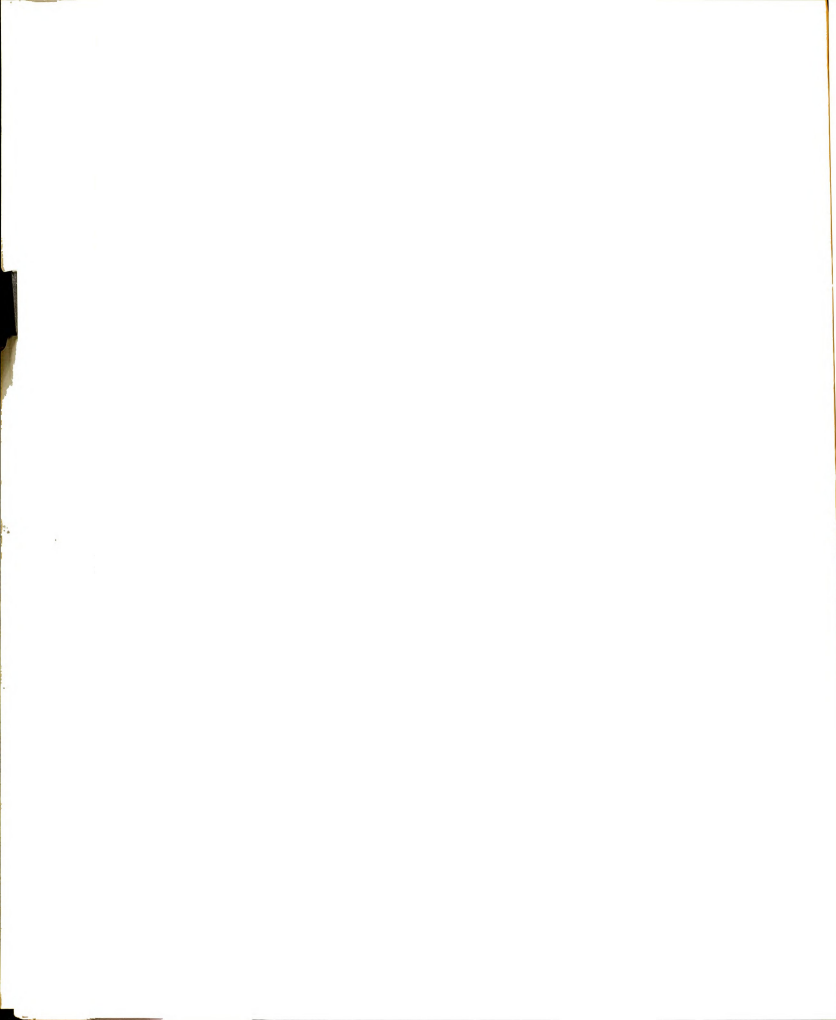
Though some of the action is related as he sees it, the point of view is primarily omniscient. What is most obvious in the narrative voice--as it is obvious in nearly all of the tales attributed to Knickerbocker--is the humor and irony. Even the description of the death struggle of Tom's wife is reported in a humorous way. He goes looking for her but finds hanging from a tree only her apron with a heart and liver tied up in it.

She must have died game, however; for it is said Tom noticed many prints of cloven feet deeply stamped about the tree, and found handfuls of hair, that looked as if they had been plucked from the coarse black shock of the woodman. Tom knew his wife's prowess by experience. He shrugged his shoulders, as he looked at the signs of a fierce clapper-clawing. "Egad," said he to himself, "Old Scratch must have had a tough time of it!" (p. 400)

The description of Tom's reaction to his wife's death, too, is handled in a humorous way.

Tom consoled himself for the loss of his property, with the loss of his wife, for he was a man of fortitude. He even felt something like gratitude towards the black woodman, who, he considered, had done him a kindness. (p. 400)

Perhaps one of the most humorous sections of the tale deals with Tom's attempts to escape the devil. He goes to great lengths to avoid his fate.



Some say that Tom grew a little crack-brained in his old days, and that fancying his end approaching, he had his horse new shod, saddled and bridled, and buried with his feet uppermost; because he supposed that at the last day the world would be turned upside down; in which case he should find his horse standing ready for mounting, and he was determined at the worst to give his old friend a run for it. (pp. 404-05)

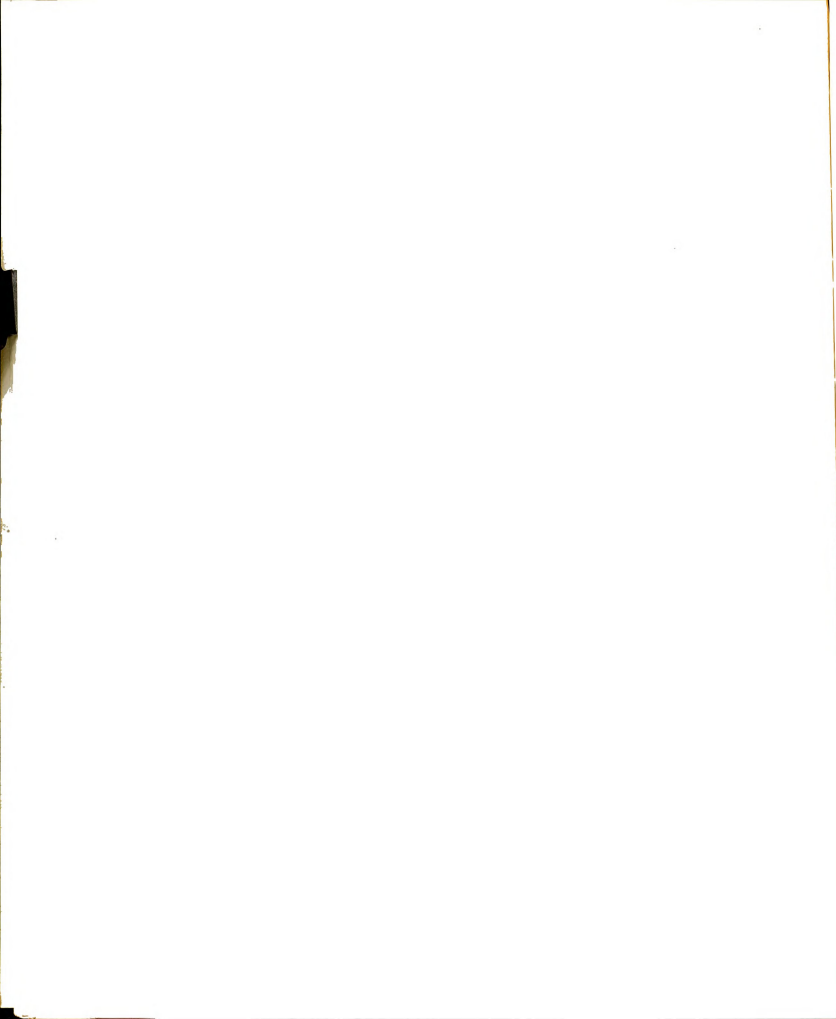
All of Tom's attempts to escape the devil bear the mark of the irony of the narrative voice. His religious zeal satirizes not only him but all those hypocrits who hide their selfishness under the guise of religious enthusiasm.

One of the stronger aspects of the tale is the effective use of detail. The opening description of the miserliness of Tom and his wife is well-supported with examples. His wife greedily secures each newly laid egg while Tom is "continually prying about to detect her secret hoards" (p. 392). What is especially convincing, however, is the description of their house and their horse.

They lived in a forlorn-looking house that stood alone, and had an air of starvation. A few straggling savin-trees, emblems of sterility, grew near it; no smoke ever curled from its chimney; no traveller stopped at its door. (p. 392)

Their horse bears even more obvious marks of their miserliness.

A miserable horse; whose ribs were as articulate as the bars of a gridiron, stalked about a field, where a thin carpet of moss, scarcely covering the ragged beds of puddingstone, tantalized and balked his hunger; and sometimes he would lean his head over the fence, look piteously at the passer-by, and seem to petition deliverance from this land of famine. (p. 392)

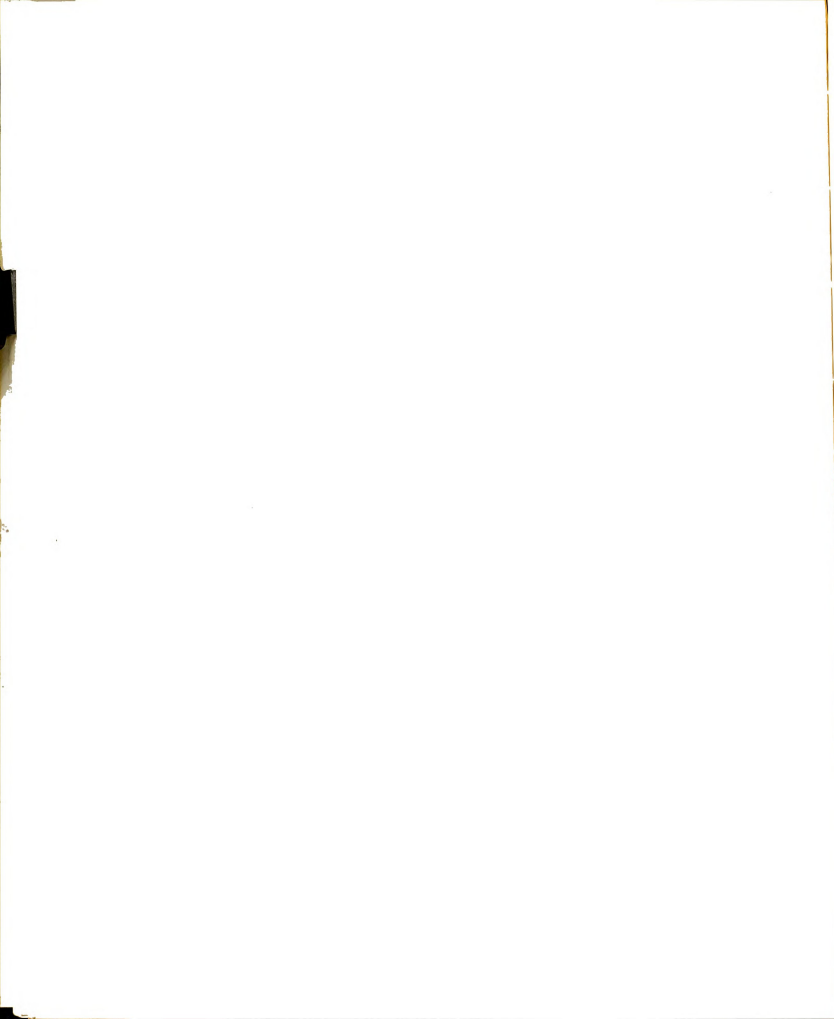


In such a way Irving successfully uses the surroundings to reinforce his introductory characterization of Tom and his wife.

The three specific incidents related in the tale are described in detail. The scene describing Tom's first encounter with the devil begins by focusing on Tom's "short cut homeward through the swamp" (p. 393).

The swamp was thickly grown with great gloomy pines and hemlocks, some of them ninety feet high, which made it dark at noonday, and a retreat for all the owls of the neighborhood. It was full of pits and quagmires, partly covered with weeds and mosses, where the green surface often betrayed the traveler into a gulf of black, smothering mud. (p. 393)

Neither the gloominess of the surroundings nor the sudden appearance of the "great black man" frightens Tom. The dialog which ensues reinforces both Tom's sneering self-possession and the devil's confidence. Tom acknowledges the identity of the stranger and they have "a long and earnest conversation together" (p. 397), which we are not allowed to overhear. This omission strengthens the tale, for what is most important in this early scene is not the discussion of terms, but the delineation of character and the establishing of mood. Holding back some information about the conversation helps create tension, which strengthens the plot. Yet Irving has not simply emphasized plot in this scene. For once he has summarized the sections which serve to advance the plot and has



focused on that part of the conversation which contributes to characterization and mood.

Any doubt about the reality of the black man's identity is dispelled when Tom learns, upon returning home, that Absalom Crowninshield has died, just as the devil predicted. His first reaction to this information ("who cares!" p. 398) reinforces the cocksureness evident in Tom's behavior with the devil. Yet we also learn that Tom "felt convinced that all he had heard and seen was no illusion" (p. 398).

Tom's second visit to the devil occurs after the disappearance of his wife, an event which is not dramatized but which again indicates the power of the black man. Tom's second encounter, though not described in as much detail as the first, employs dialogue which not only advances the plot, but also reinforces the miserliness of Tom. Once they agree that Tom should become a usurer, they enthusiastically settle the details.

"You shall open a broker's shop in Boston next month," said the black man.

"I'll do it to-morrow, if you wish," said Tom Walker.

"You shall lend money at two percent, a month."

"Egad, I'll charge four!" replied Tom Walker.

"You shall extort bond, foreclose mortgages, drive the merchants to bankruptcy . . ."

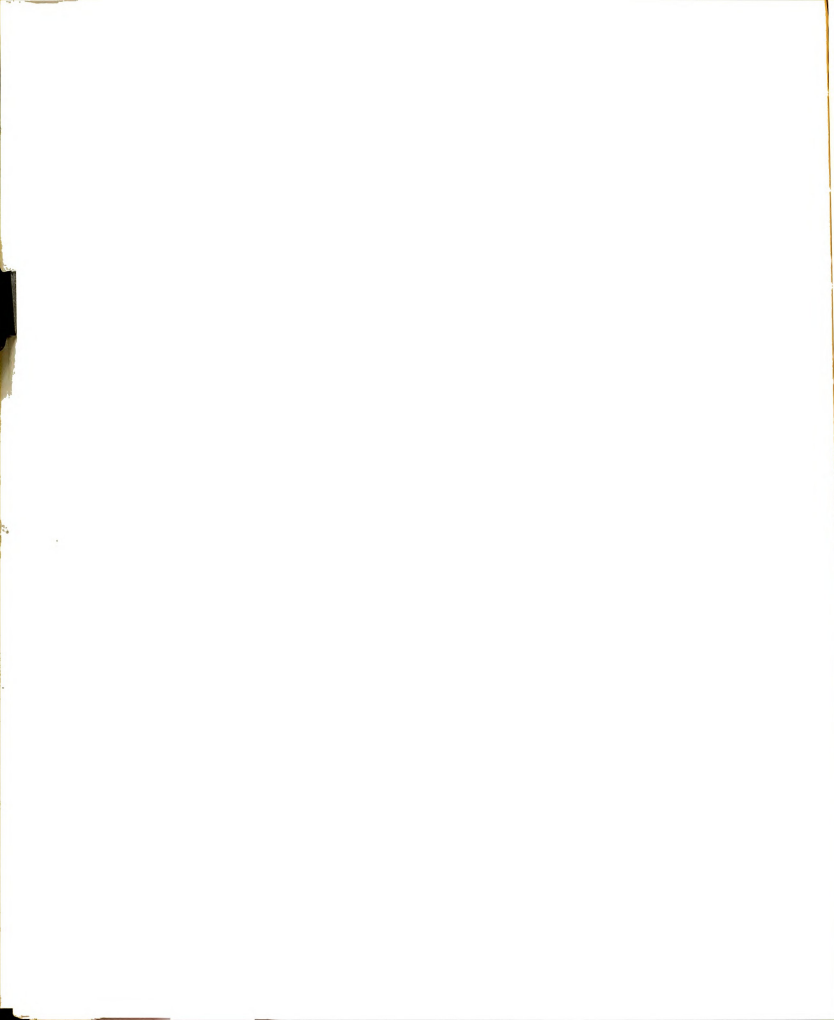
"I'll drive them to the d---l," cried Tom Walker.

"You are the usurer for my money!" said black-legs with delight. "When will you want the rhino?"

"This very night."

"Done!" said the devil.

"Done!" said Tom Walker. --So they shook hands and struck a bargain. (p. 402)

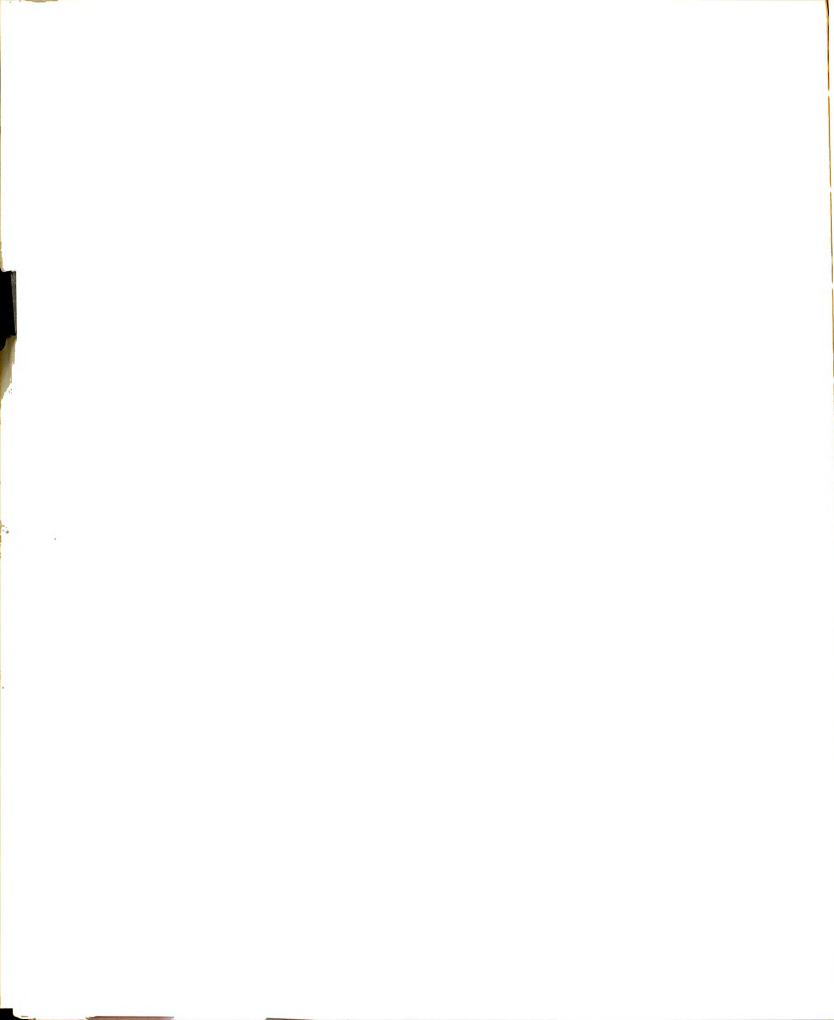


And so in his excitement Tom nearly out-devils the devil.

The third and final incident in which the devil collects his debt also includes dialogue, but certainly not so much detail as the original encounter does. Once again, however, the dialogue reinforces the previous narrative description of Tom's character. Once Tom succeeds financially and approaches old age, he begins to worry about his pact with the devil and he "set his wits to work to cheat him out of the conditions." He plays the role of a reformed man, becoming "all of a sudden, a violent church-goer." His enthusiasm for religion is no less than his enthusiasm for usury. He prayed loudly and strenuously, as if heaven were to be taken by force of lungs" (p. 404). Yet his real nature has not changed. That the religious fervor is indeed all outward show becomes obvious in the final incident. While foreclosing a mortgage one hot summer afternoon Tom becomes irritated with his client who is complaining that his family will be ruined.

Tom lost his patience and his piety--"The devil take me," said he, "if I have made a farthing!" (p. 405)

As if on cue, the devil immediately appears at the door and captures Tom. "The black man whisked him like a child into the saddle, gave the horse the lash, and away he galloped, with Tom on his back, in the midst of



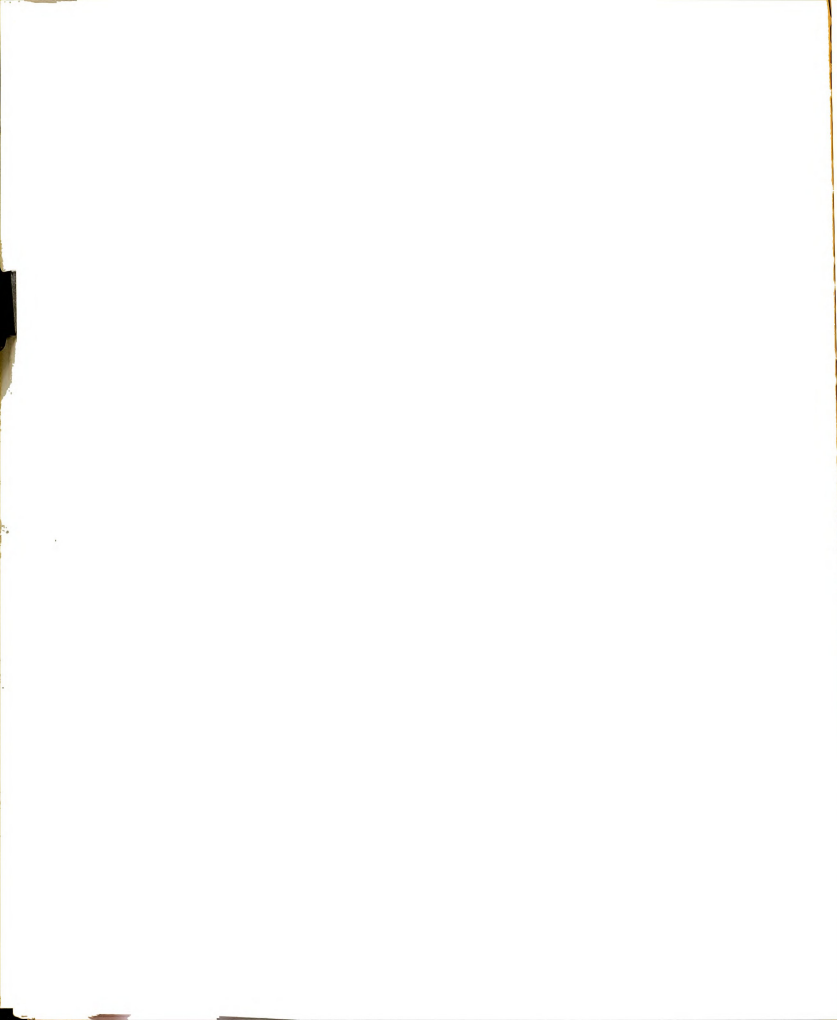
the thunderstorm" (p. 406). An obvious moral ends the tale: "Let all griping money-brokers lay this story to heart" (p. 407).

Though the length and focus of the tale make it more of a short story than "The Student of Salamanca," "The Devil and Tom Walker" has some serious weaknesses. Once again there is little evidence of an internal character conflict. Tom does not change nor are we allowed, even temporarily, to believe in his apparent change of heart. We are, in fact, never really in doubt as to the tale's outcome, and thus the plot's tension is not as effective as it might be. What happens is that Irving sacrifices character struggle and plot tension for humor and irony.

Tom's sudden religious "conversion" illustrates the irony. We are continually reminded that Tom's change was only superficial and that his true nature was ever-present. His Bible reading did not affect his miserliness in the least.

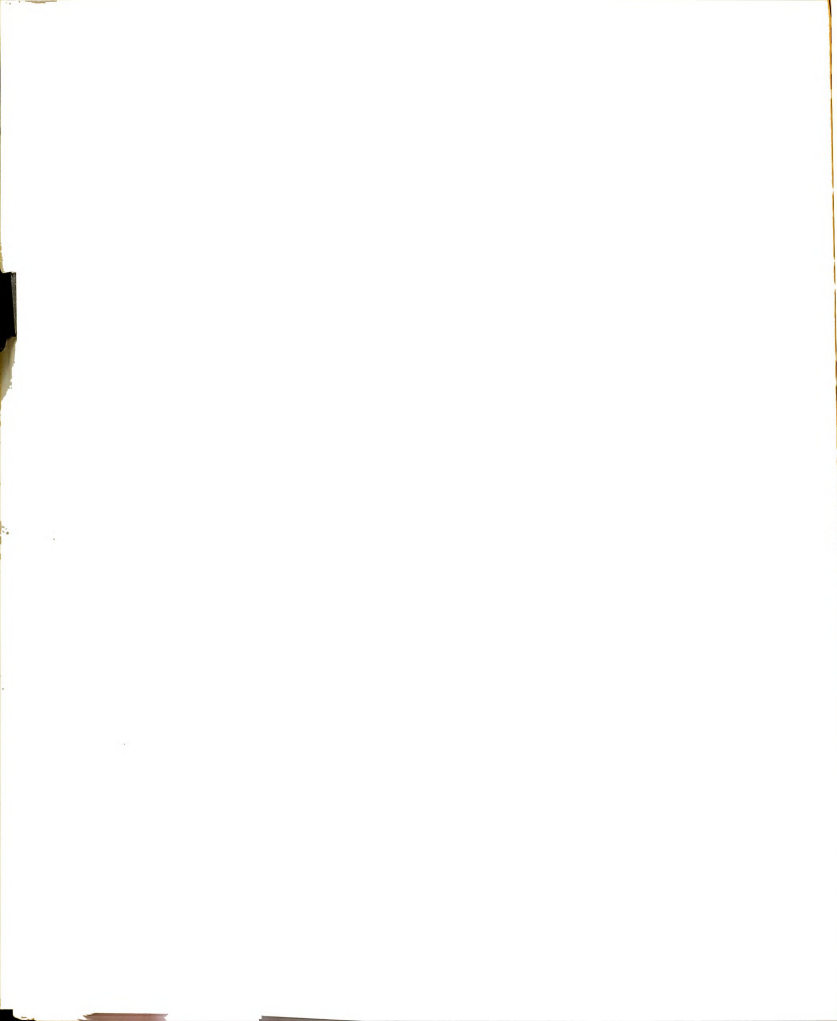
He had also a great folio Bible on his counting-house desk, and would frequently be found reading it when people called on business; on such occasions he would lay his green spectacles in the book, to mark the place, while he turned round to drive some usurious bargain. (p. 404)

The ironic humor is further intensified by his elaborate scheme of burying his horse upside down to escape the devil. Such attempts to escape his fate are really the only evidence of an external character conflict. And



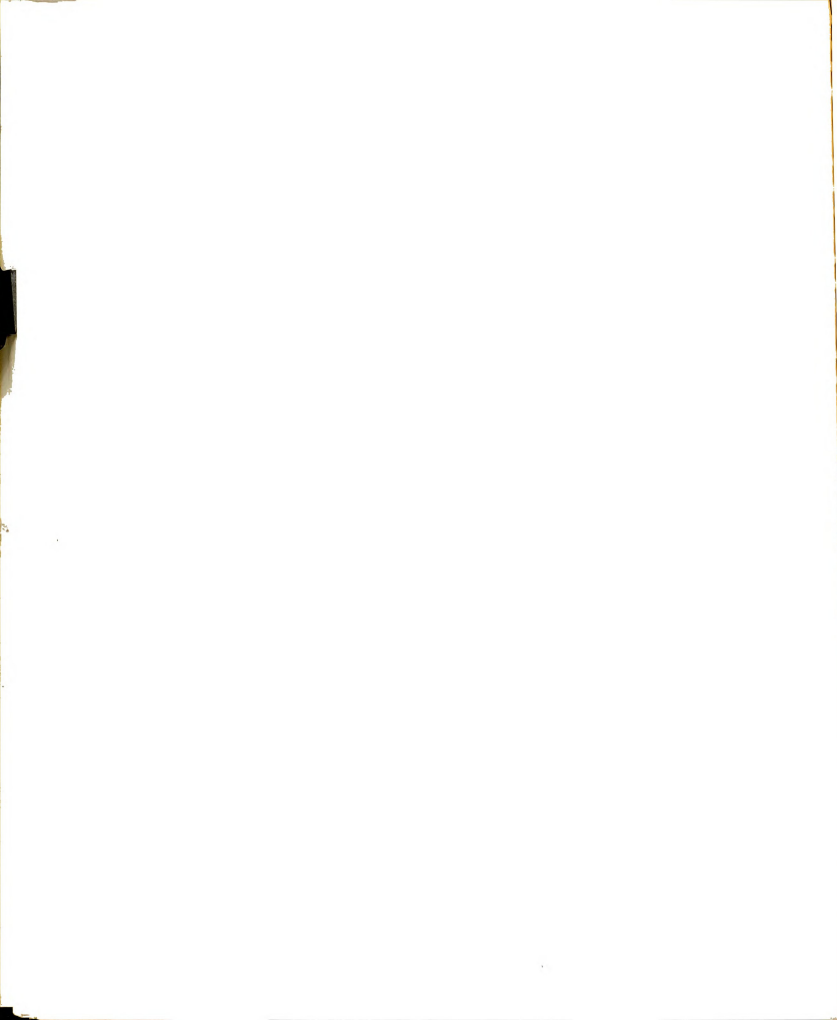
because the tone is ironic and humorous, we tend to laugh at Tom rather than sympathize with him. The narrative voice never allows the struggle to become serious or strenuous. The major tension is therefore a consequence of the humor. We wait--almost with delightful anticipation--for Tom to get his due.

Of course, humor is a legitimate means of creating tension and this alone would not prevent the tale from being classified as a short story. A genuine character conflict can be either humorous or serious. The conflict here, however, is imposed by the ironic tone of the narrative voice. The irony is based on the contradiction which develops late in the story between what Tom is and what he thinks he is. Or it might be more accurate to say the opposition is between what Tom thinks he can do and what he actually can do. Tom's character, however, does not change or develop nor does our perception of him change. We see Tom at the beginning of the pact and at the conclusion of it. What happens in between is summarized in an ironic tone, which leads us to believe that Tom has not changed at all. Some indication of struggle is evident in the final scene, but the scene is not rendered in enough detail to be convincing. And thus, though some tension is created by the repetition of Tom's miserliness which leads us to anticipate his eventual punishment, there is little plot



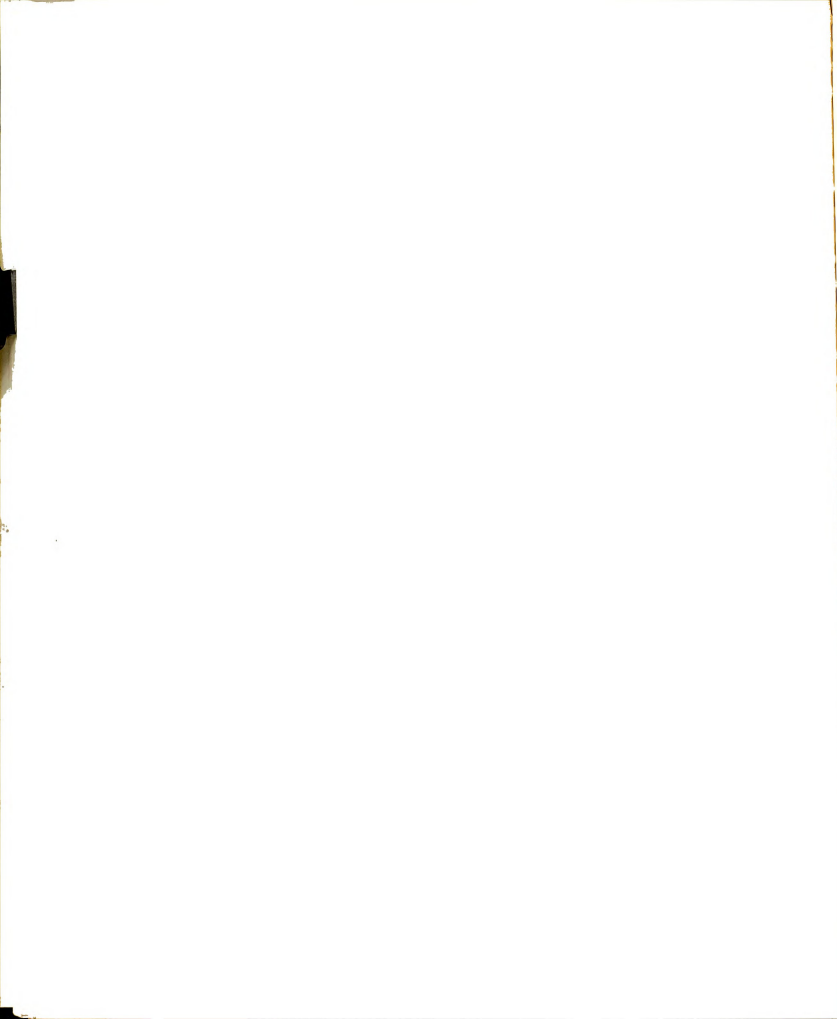
tension and almost no tension in characterization. The resolution, therefore, though it is effective, certainly is not as powerful as it might be. It might be accurate to label "The Devil and Tom Walker" a parable, for the moral is obvious and the entire piece, though it is humorous, reads more like an example or a lesson than a story. In this selection Irving has not disguised his moral as fully as he wished.

The four tales discussed, though they are representative of Irving's most successful tales, are only a few of the many tales he wrote. A survey of his tales reveals some interesting information. First of all, most of the tales appear in his later collections, Tales of a Traveller and The Alhambra. Secondly, only a few of the tales are narrated by Crayon and in only a few is the narrator physically present in the narrative. What seems to happen consistently in the tales, as opposed to the sketches, is that Irving concerns himself not with painting scenes or character, but with relating a plot. Thirdly, Tales of a Traveller marks a turning point in Irving's ability to skillfully construct a plot. The plots of many of the smaller tales are integrated into a carefully wrought larger structure. Had the collection been warmly received, the Irving tale may have evolved into another form, but the negative critical response to Tales of a Traveller crushed Irving's confidence and



willingness to experiment with form. Sadly enough, the tales in The Alhambra are seldom skillfully composed.

Lastly, it is important to remember that the development of Irving's tales did not precede his short stories. The distinction between his tales and short stories, in fact, is one which has relevance primarily from a historical perspective. Neither Irving, himself, nor his contemporaries classified his fiction by any strict formal criterion. Yet the development of the American short story was undoubtedly influenced by Irving's writings, and perhaps the number of stories he wrote is not so important as the qualities which characterize them.



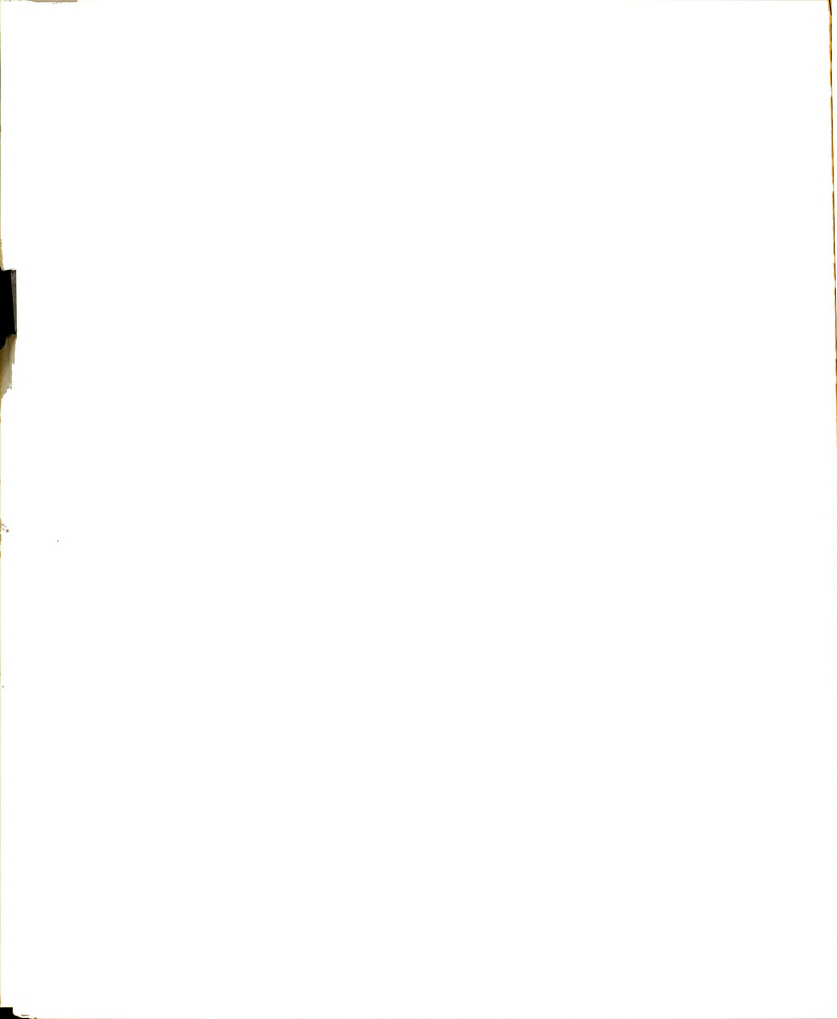
CHAPTER III

THE SHORT STORY

Irving wrote three selections which can be classified as short stories, "The Spectre Bridegroom," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and "Rip Van Winkle." In each of these Irving is able to skillfully shape the fictional elements to produce a unified whole. An examination of the stories reveals that they share several characteristics. All three have German sources.¹ All three are structurally and thematically unified. The tone and much of the tension of these stories depends in large part on the comic irony of the narrative voice which lightly jests with the characters, the social customs, and at times with the gothic style. (One critic believes that the three stories are classic examples of "sportive gothicism."²) And, finally, in none of the selections is the narrator physically present.

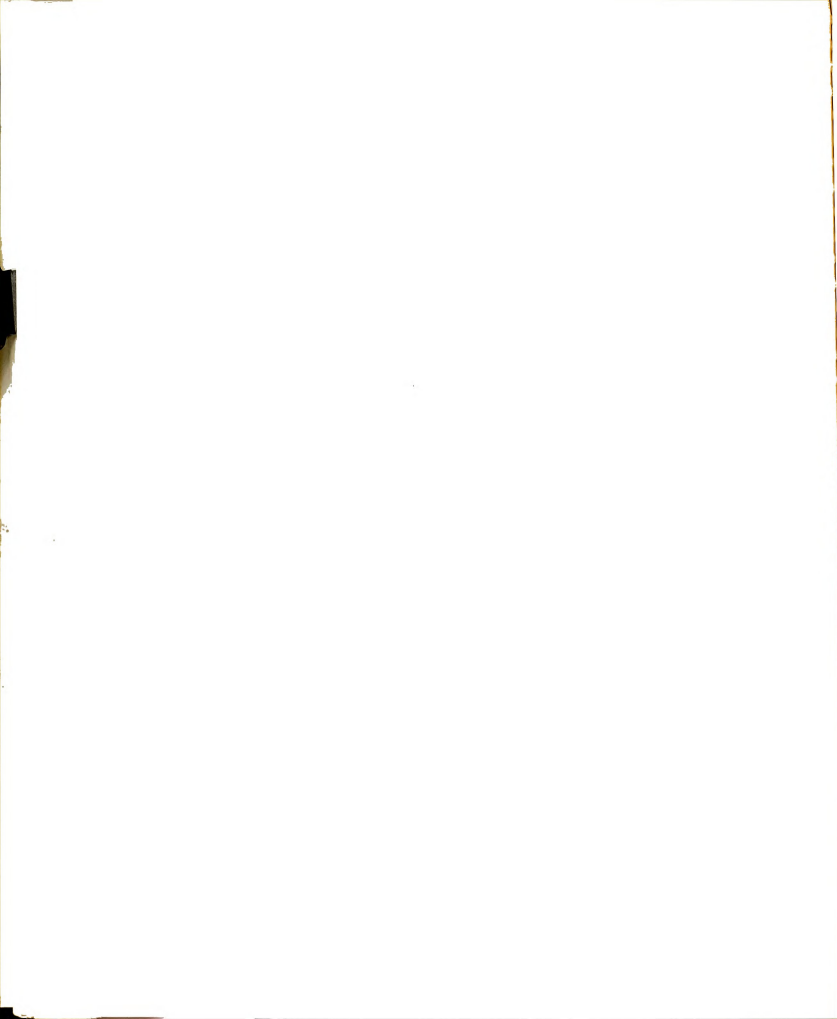
¹Henry A. Pochmann, "Irving's German Sources in The Sketch Book," Studies in Philology, 27 (1930), 477-507.

²Oral Sumner Coad, "The Gothic Element in American Literature Before 1835," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 24 (1925), 83.



Of these qualities, the two which seem to be most crucial to the success of the selections as short stories are first, the physical removal of the narrator and second, the effective control of tension and resolution. Both of these characteristics contribute to a structural and thematic unity. By removing the narrator from the story, Irving avoids the difficulty which usually arises in his sketches, that is, a focus divided between Crayon as narrator and the ostensible subject of the piece. In the short stories, not only is Crayon not present, but none of the three are even related by Crayon. "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" are found among the papers of Diedrich Knickerbocker, and "The Spectre Bridegroom" is related by "a corpulent old Swiss, who had the look of a veteran traveller" (p. 189). What Irving does in these stories is to replace Crayon with an ironic narrative voice which subtly and skillfully guides the reader's reactions without interfering with the focus, and without moralizing directly.

Yet as the previous chapter illustrates, a detached narrative voice is not sufficient to produce a short story. Perhaps the most important distinction between Irving's tales and short stories is that the stories effectively and efficiently build tension, then at the appropriate moment resolve that tension. But a good short story, as we shall see, does much more than this.



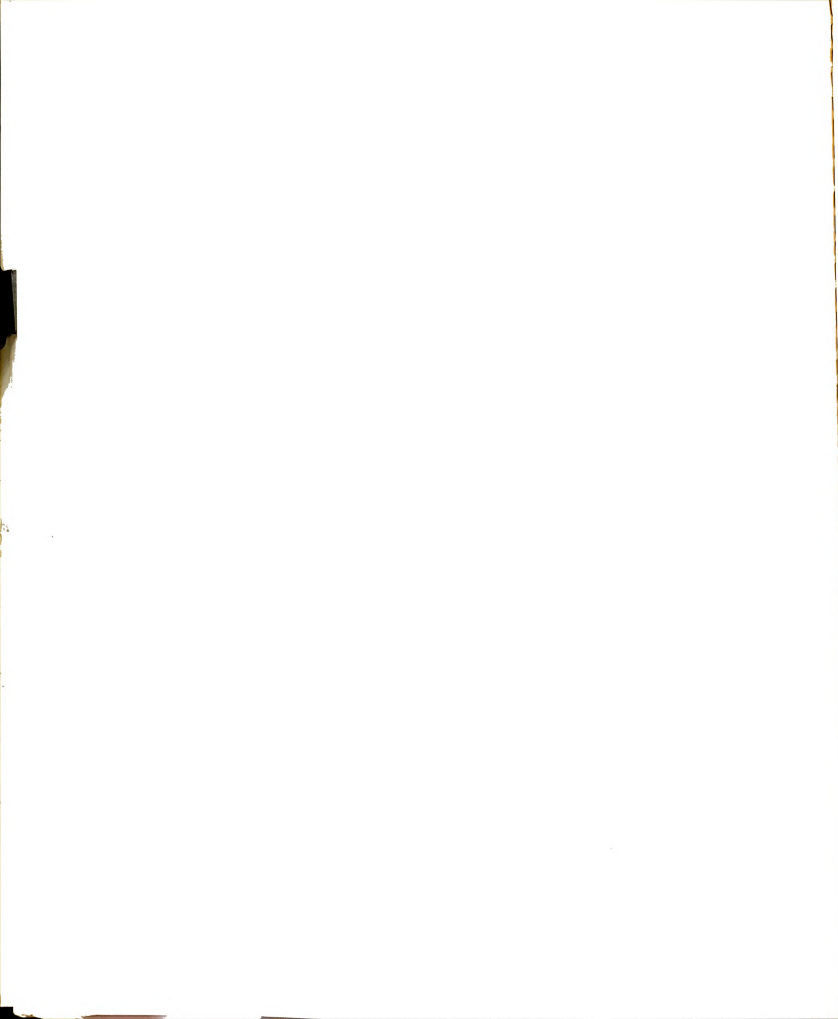
Though all three of the stories have German sources, "The Spectre Bridegroom" differs from the others in its setting. As Walter Reichart points out, the story is based entirely upon literary sources.

The background of the story, the romantic scenery of the Odewald in Germany, the names of places and characters lay completely outside of Irving's experience. Hence it was impossible to give intimate and lifelike portrayals of persons or scenes. Irving had not yet reached the borders of Germany and depended solely upon his imagination or his booklore for the creation of his setting. Therefore he avoided descriptive details and was content to create the impression of familiarity with the environment through a casual use of German phrases.³

Several critics have noted that Irving's probable source for the story was the famous German ballad "Lenore," which relates the tale of a girl who is carried off in the night by the ghost of her dead lover. The ballad was well known by Irving's readers and his humorous treatment of it would be easily appreciated by that audience.

Irving's version of the plot focuses on the Katzenellenbogen family of Odewald. Baron Von Landshort, his daughter and her aunts are preparing to receive the daughter's intended husband, Count Von Altenburg, whom none of them has yet met. The bridegroom, however, is waylaid and murdered on his way to the wedding feast.

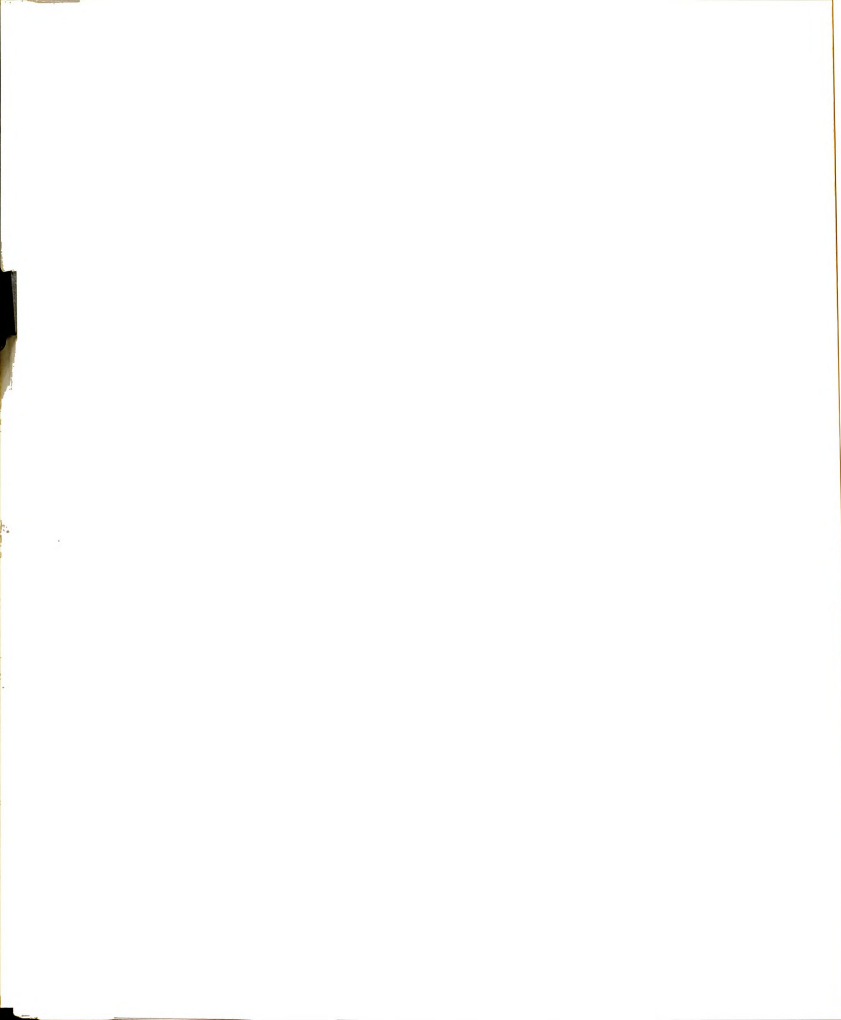
³Walter A. Reichart, Washington Irving and Germany, University of Michigan Publications--Language and Literature, Vol. 28 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1957), p. 32.



His dying words beseech his friend Herman Von Starkenfaust to carry the news of his death to his bride. Though the Starkenfaust family has been feuding for years with the Baron's family, Herman agrees to fulfill the Count's final wish. Meanwhile, as sunset descends, the Baron and his guests are anxiously awaiting the groom's arrival. When a lone man, simply dressed and mounted on a black steed approaches the castle, the Baron receives him as the groom and the long delayed wedding dinner begins. At midnight, having infected the entire company with his gloomy attitude, the stranger unexpectedly departs, telling the Baron that he must keep his appointment with the grave. The bride who is deeply attracted to the stranger is distraught by his departure. A day or so later, after seeing the spectre in her garden, the daughter disappears but soon reappears married to the spectre who is revealed to be Herman Von Starkenfaust.

Most critics agree that "The Spectre Bridegroom" was intended as a humorous satire of the romantic and supernatural trappings of the gothic style. John Clendenning, who has closely examined the gothic elements in Irving's fiction, points out that Irving's gothicism was "about half-way between modern fiction and the cult of Mrs. Radcliff."⁴

⁴ John Clendenning, "Irving and the Gothic Tradition," BuR, 12, No. 2 (1964), 90-91.



When he began producing his major works--The Sketch Book (1819-20), Bracebridge Hall (1822), and Tales of a Traveller (1824)--the popularity of gothic novels was falling apart, and a period of reaction, represented chiefly by Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey (1818), was under way. (Clendenning, p. 91)

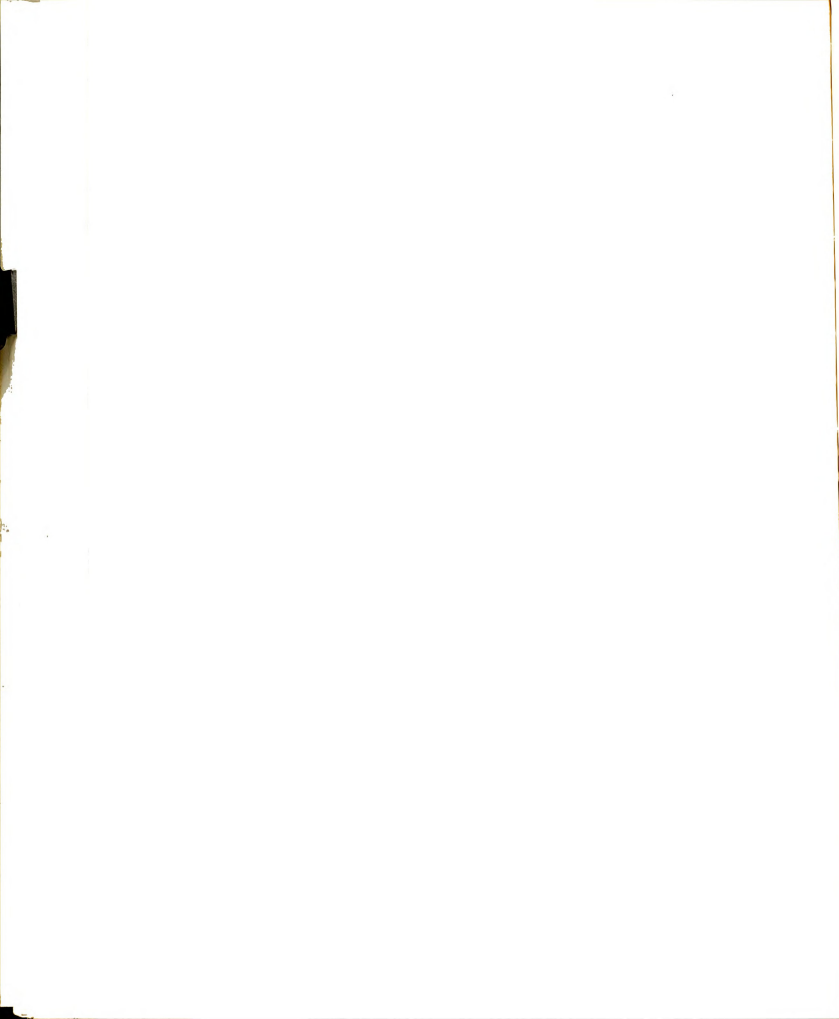
Clendenning goes on to distinguish between the "sportive gothic" of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and the "parody" of "The Spectre Bridegroom."

But "sportive" gothicism is not parody, though Irving's critics have tended to confuse them. "Sleepy Hollow" is only allegorically an attack on gothicism; parody reveals the excesses of a genre by imitating it. This distinction should be clear enough if we examine genuine parody of gothic fiction, "The Spectre Bridegroom." Unlike the other Sketch Book tales, this story has the stereotypic setting of medieval Germany, complete with the satiric names, Baron Von Landshort, Herman Von Starkenfaust, and Katzenellenbogen. (pp. 93-94)

That "The Spectre Bridegroom" is intended as parody is immediately evident in the opening paragraphs of the story. The narrative voice carefully guides our responses, sometimes by footnotes, sometimes by comparisons or by implied contrasts. The first indication of the comic tone is explicit in the footnote to the subtitle, "A Traveller's Tale":

The erudite reader, well versed in good-for-nothing lore, will perceive that the above Tale must have been suggested to the old Swiss by a little French anecdote a circumstance said to have taken place at Paris. (p. 190)

The comic tone is sustained in the first paragraph when we are introduced to the Baron and given his full name: Baron Von Landshort. His character is then humorously compared to the watch tower of his castle.

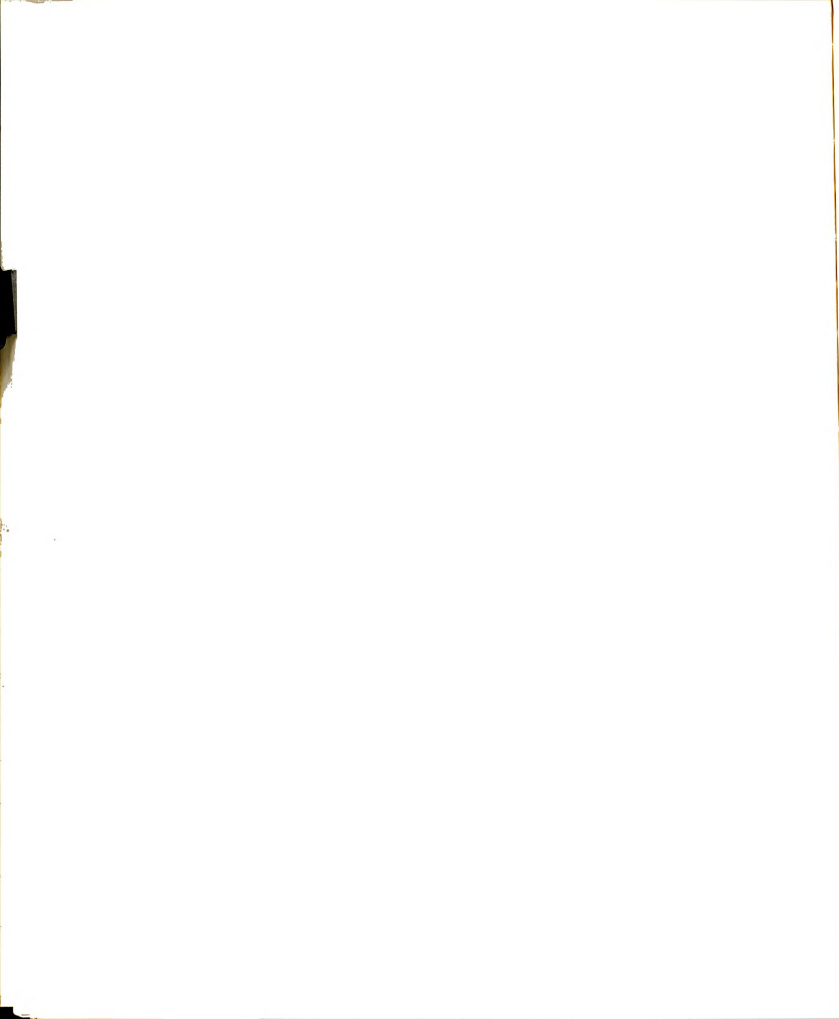


It is now quite fallen to decay, and almost buried among beech trees and dark firs; above which, however, its old watch-tower may still be seen, struggling, like the former possessor I have mentioned, to carry a high head, and look down upon the neighboring country. (p. 190)

The second paragraph pursues the comic aspect of the Baron, who is identified as the "dry branch" of the Katzenellenbogen family. The footnote to the family name dispels any question lingering in the reader's mind about the seriousness of the story. The footnote reads:

i.e., CAT'S ELBOW. The name of a family of those parts very powerful in former times. The appellation we are told, was given in compliment to a peerless dame of the family, celebrated for her fine arm. (p. 190)

The comic irony of these opening paragraphs pervades the entire plot and dominates the first half of the story. Both the characters and the social customs are treated humorously. The opening comments about the Baron are continued in the description which follows. We are told that he continues family feuds for no other reason than to follow tradition. Later during the preparations for the wedding feast, he is described as "naturally a fuming bustling little man, . . . [who] could not remain passive when all the world was in a hurry," even though he had "in truth, nothing exactly to do" (p. 195). During the feast we are told that the Baron "like most great men, was too dignified to utter any joke but a dull one" (p. 201). His concern with the appearances of others



is also satirized. When the stranger finally arrives, the Baron's immediate response is to notice the simplicity of the groom's attire.

The Baron was a little mortified that he should have come in this simple, solitary style. His dignity for a moment was ruffled, and he felt disposed to consider it a want of proper respect for the important occasion, and the important family with which he was to be connected. (p. 199)

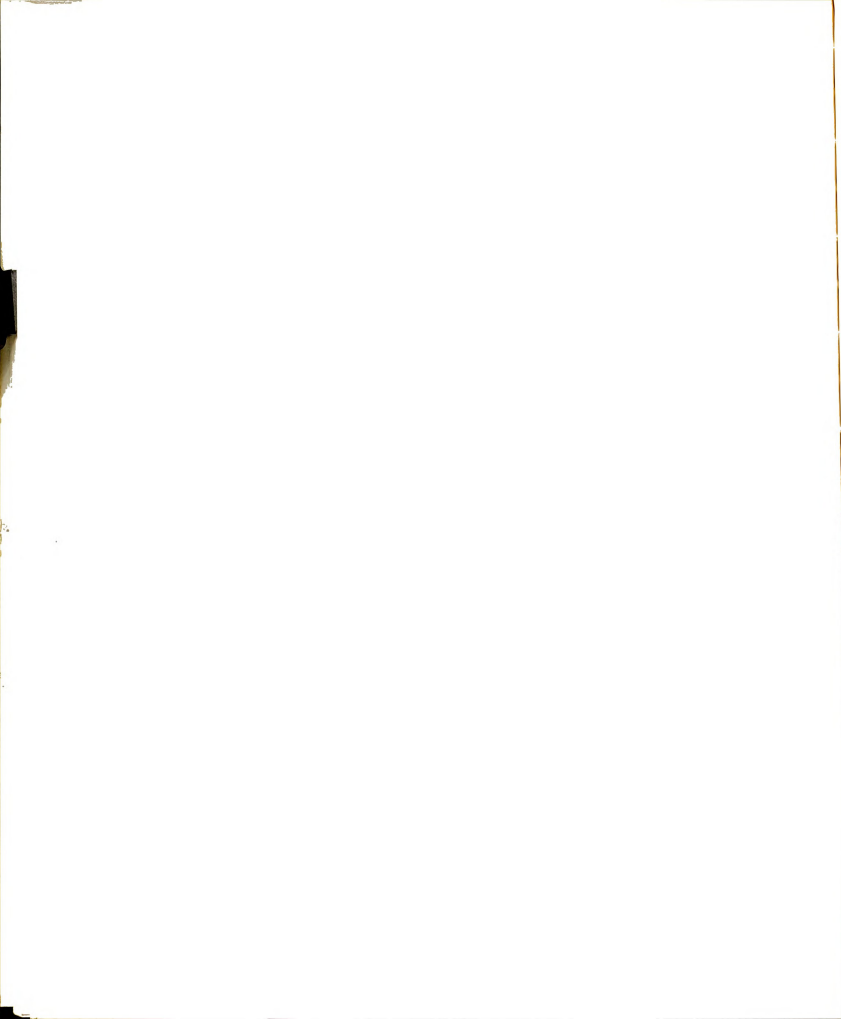
Later, at the end of the story, the Baron's concern with appearances assumes even more comic proportions. Having apparently lost his only daughter to a goblin and about to embark in search of her, the Baron is astounded by the appearance of the young couple approaching the castle.

It is the attire of the stranger that most surprises him.

The Baron was astounded. He looked at his daughter, then at the spectre, and almost doubted the evidence of his senses. The latter, too, was wonderfully improved in his appearance since his visit to the world of spirits. His dress was splendid, and set off a noble figure of manly symmetry. He was no longer pale and melancholy. His fine countenance was flushed with the glow of youth, and joy rioted in his large dark eye. (pp. 207-08)

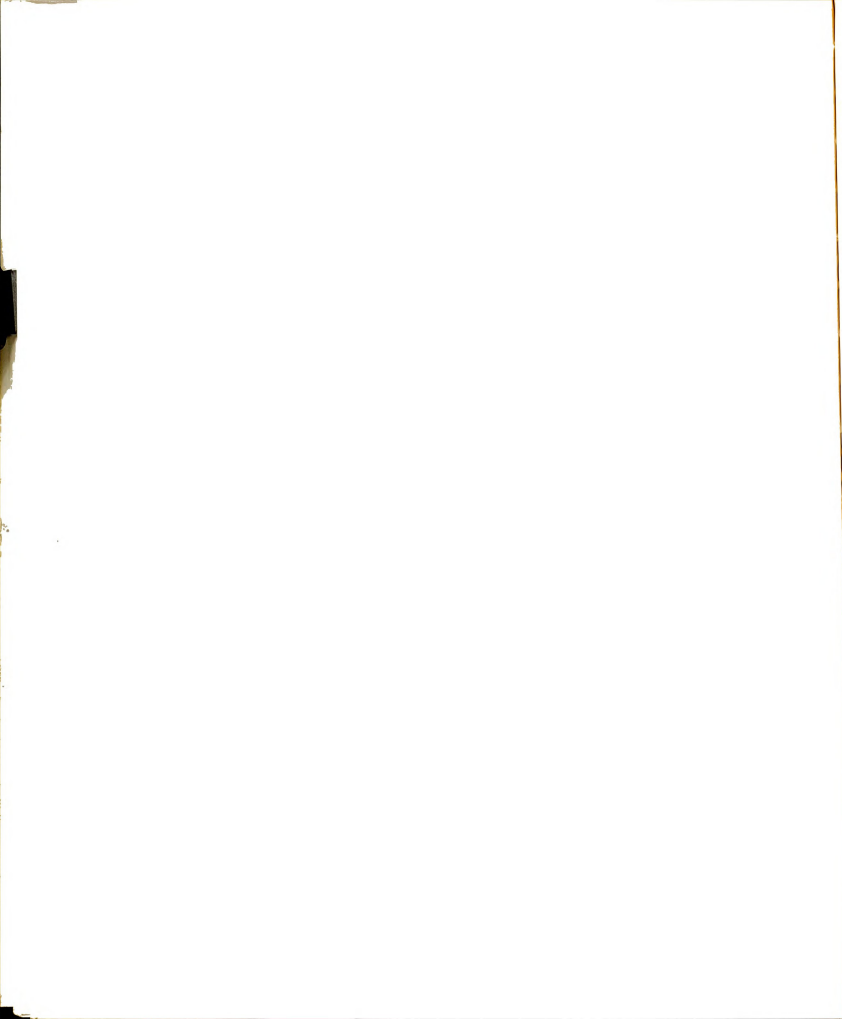
The comic characterization of the Baron is so consistent, in fact, that we never are able to take him seriously.

Nor are we allowed to regard the aunts seriously, for they are continually satirized. Their hypocrisy is exposed early in the story. We are told that they were "great flirts and coquettes in their younger days," and thus, they were well-suited to be "vigilant guardians and strict censors of the conduct of their niece; for there is no duenna so rigidly prudent, and inexorably



decorous, as a superannuated coquette" (p. 192). Later, when the preparations for the feast are in progress, the aunts hover over the excited bride--"for maiden aunts are apt to take great interest in affairs of this nature" (p. 194). Perhaps the most ironic comment on the aunts' smugness is their security that "though all the other young ladies in the world might go astray, yet, thank Heaven, nothing of the kind could happen to the heiress of Katzenellenbogen" (pp. 192-93).

Even the bride herself receives some of the ironic edge of the narrative voice, though much of the satire seems aimed at the culture which bred her rather than at the girl herself. Both her education and upbringing are satirized as conditioning her for the unnatural and the useless. Her tendency to the unnatural is exhibited in her embroidery which contained "whole histories of the saints . . . with such strength of expression in their countenances, that they looked like so many souls in purgatory" (p. 191). It is no wonder that she has a fascination for the grotesque aspect of her spectre lover. Her other accomplishments are either useless--"She excelled in making little elegant good-for-nothing lady-like nicknacks of all kinds"--or contribute to the romantic aspects of her character--She "knew all the tender ballads of the Minnie-lieders by heart" (p. 192). The bride is thus perfectly suited to the events in the



story. She has an inclination for the grotesque, a receptivity to the romantic and little experience or training with the practical. Her qualities in fact burlesque the typical heroine of gothic fiction.

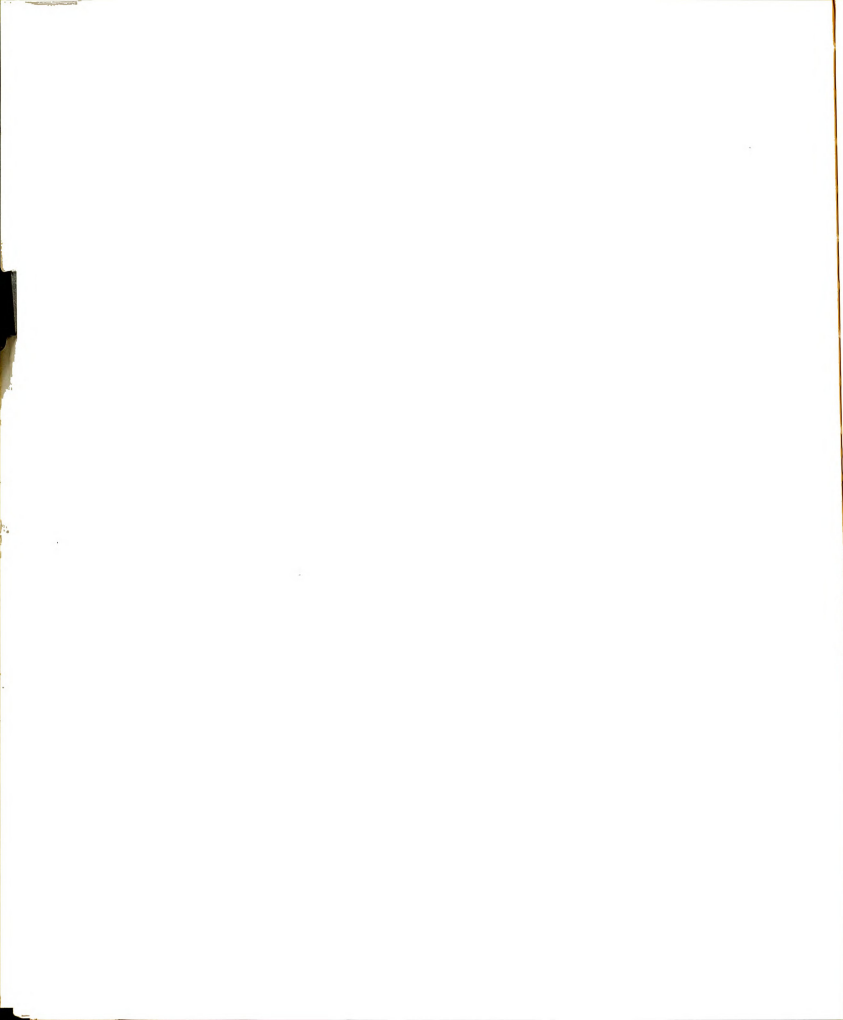
The social customs of the area are also satirized. The Baron is surrounded by relatives who depend on him.

But however scantily the Baron Von Landshort might be provided with children, his household was by no means a small one, for Providence had enriched him with an abundance of poor relations. They, one and all, possessed the affectionate disposition common to humble relatives; were wonderfully attached to the Baron, and took every possible occasion to come in swarms and enliven the castle. (p. 193)

Not only do his relatives and friends support him in his festivities, but like "loyal" friends should, they stay when he is distraught over the disappearance of the groom.

The guests, who had come to rejoice with him, could not think of abandoning him in his distress. They wandered about the courts, or collected in groups in the hall, shaking their heads and shrugging their shoulders at the troubles of so good a man; and sat longer than ever at table, and ate and drank more stoutly than ever, by way of keeping up their spirits. (p. 205)

The popular belief in supernatural tales is another target of the narrative irony. The company is convinced of the supernatural aspect of the stranger. When one poor relation ventures to suggest that the disappearance of the stranger might be a "sportive evasion of the young cavalier," the company upbraids



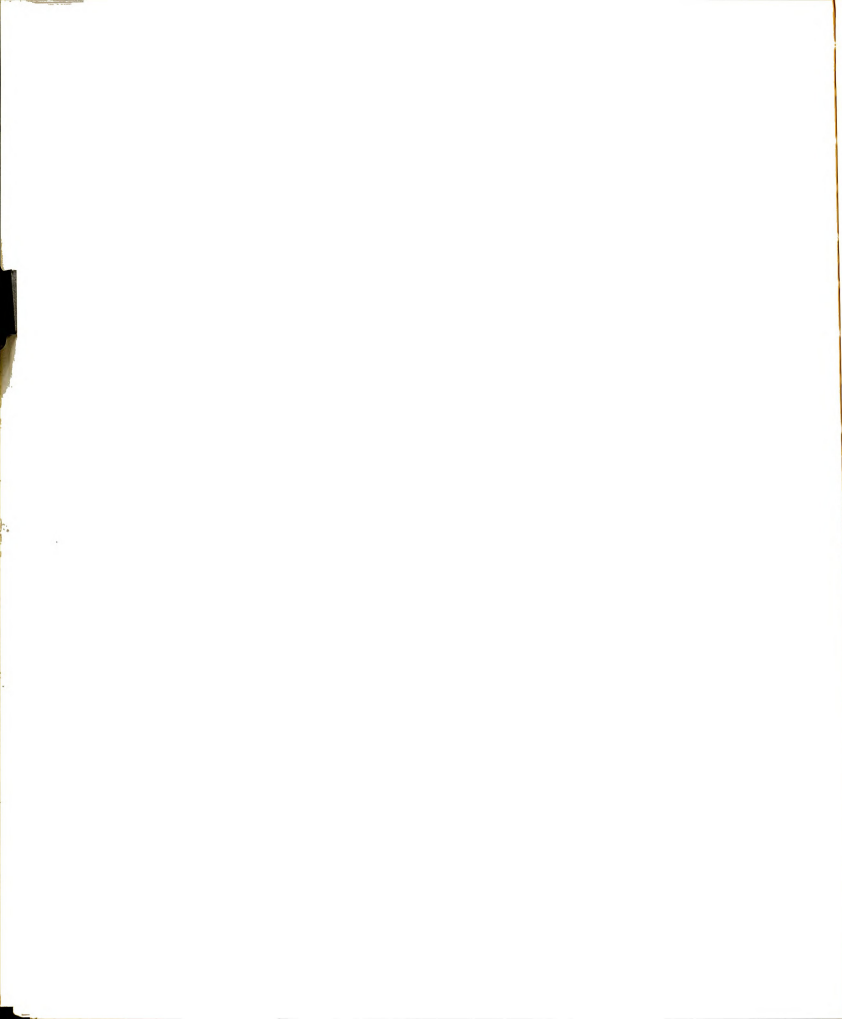
him indignantly and forces him to "abjure his heresy as speedily as possible" (p. 204). The narrative commentary later reinforces this jest at the superstitions of the populace when the aunt declares that the goblin has carried away her niece.

All present were struck with the direful probability; for events of the kind are extremely common in Germany, as many well authenticated histories bear witness. (p. 207)

Yet, though the ironic humor of the narrative voice dominates much of the story, it is an oversimplification to classify "The Spectre Bridegroom" merely as a parody of the gothic story of horror. The dominant tone is humorous, but the story is not entirely comic. For while he is jesting, Irving is also carefully laying the scene for a change to a more serious atmosphere. The early preparations for the groom's arrival are light and gay--full of ironic humor. But as the day wears on, the anxiety of the expectant host heightens. When the groom fails to appear, the setting sun contributes to the sobering mood.

The last ray of sunshine departed--the bats began to flit by in the twilight--the road grew dimmer and dimmer to the view; and nothing appeared stirring in it but now and then a peasant lagging homeward from his labor. (p. 195)

After the brief interruption which conveys the death of the count, we return to the scene of the wedding party which is now shrouded in darkness and disappointment. Though the eventual appearance of the "groom" livens the



party for a while, it is not long before the mood sobers once again, this time with an added touch of mystery. Throughout the initial visit of the spectre, both the setting and the behavior of the other characters reinforce the credibility of the spectre and the seriousness of the tone. Contrary to the early treatment of the Baron and his family, the stranger is treated neither lightly nor ironically. His demeanor is a somber one.

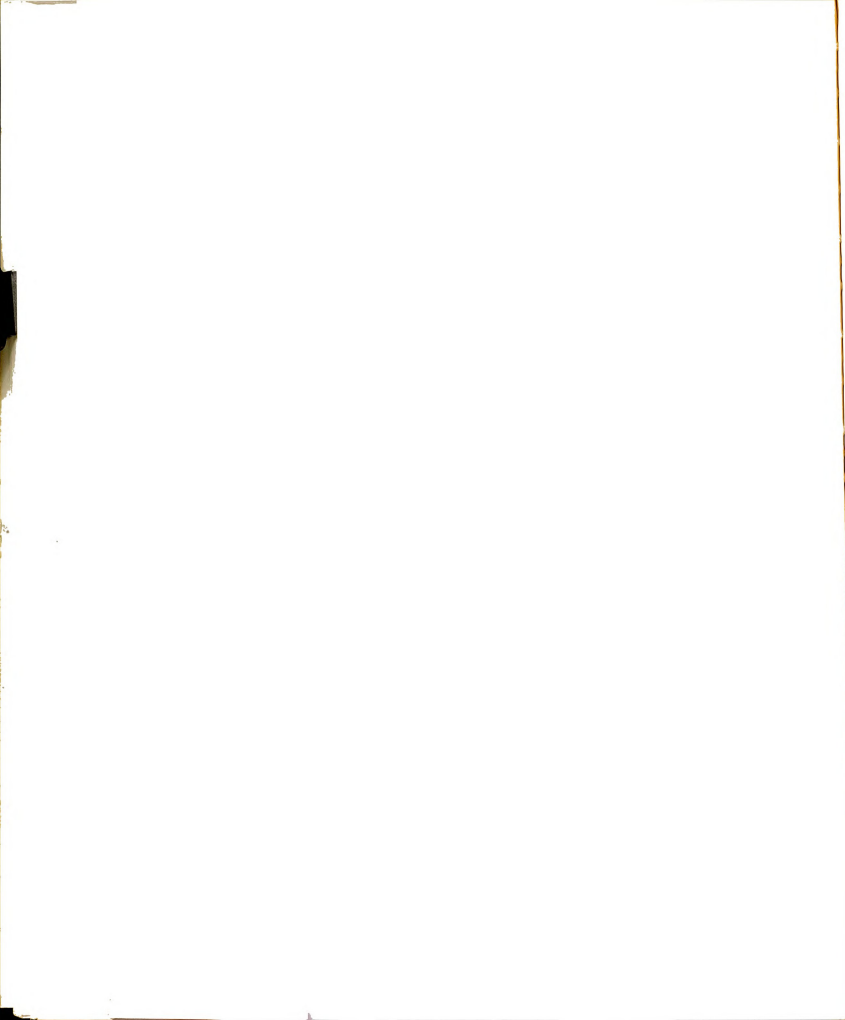
He was a tall, gallant cavalier, mounted on a black steed. His countenance was pale, but he had a beaming romantic eye, and an air of stately melancholy. (p. 199)

The serious description of the stranger is also extended to the affection which develops between the couple. Though their responses are perhaps sentimental, they are not mocked.

He gazed on her for a moment as one entranced; it seemed as if his whole soul beamed forth in the gaze, and rested upon that lovely form. . . . She made an effort to speak; her moist blue eye was timidly raised; gave a shy glance of inquiry on the stranger; and was cast again to the ground. (pp. 199-200)

And even though the bride's affection for the spectre contains elements of the grotesque, it is not treated simply as a joke; nor is his attraction to her.

There is some humor in the description of the spectre at the feast where "a huge pair of antlers branched immediately over the head of the youthful bridegroom" (p. 290). But the humor is short lived and the gloom of his countenance is described without



irony. His behavior infects the entire party, permeating the mood of the feast.

The song and the laugh grew less and less frequent; there were dreary pauses in the conversation, which were at length succeeded by wild tales and supernatural legends. (p. 202)

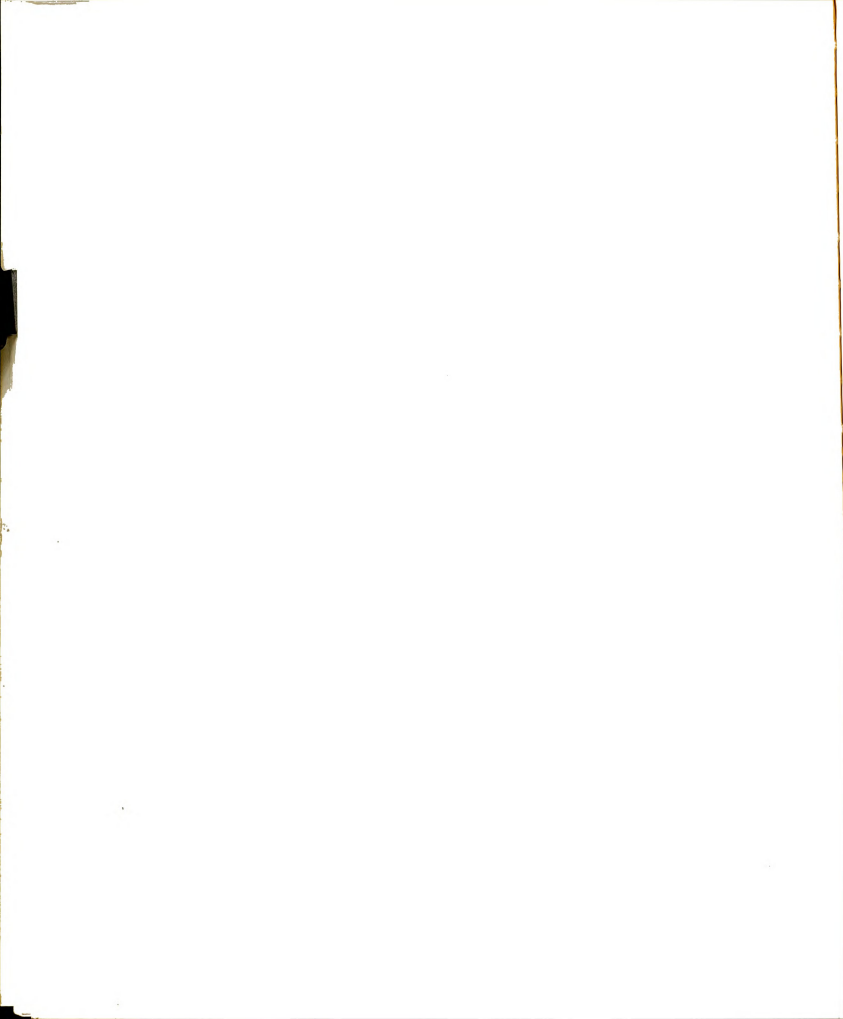
Just as the stranger sobers the feast, so the description of him counters the light humorous tone of the story. The characters regard him seriously and the narrative voice describes him seriously--and we, thus, begin to at least suspect that indeed the man may possibly be the ghost of the dead count. Our suspicions are heightened by the description of the stranger's abrupt and unexpected departure at midnight.

The baron followed the stranger to the great court of the castle, where the black charger stood pawing the earth, and snorting with impatience.--When they had reached the portal, whose deep archway was dimly lighted by a cresset, the stranger paused, and addressed the baron in a hollow tone of voice, which the vaulted roof rendered still more sepulchral. (p. 203)

The stranger's departing speech is a bit chilling even to the knowing reader.

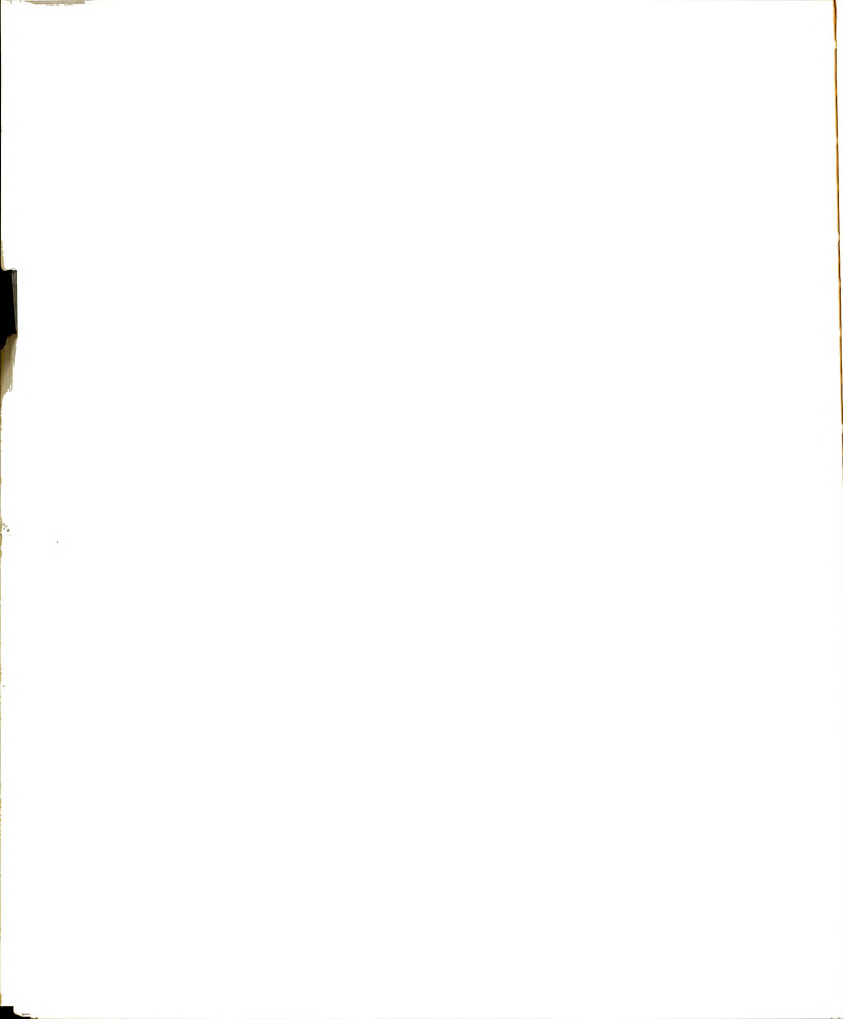
"No! no!" replied the stranger, with tenfold solemnity, "my engagement is with no bride--the worms! the worms expect me! I am a dead man--I have been slain by robbers--my body lies at Wurtzburg--at midnight I am to be buried--the grave is waiting for me--I must keep my appointment!" (pp. 203-04)

With these parting words he "sprang on his black charger, dashed over the drawbridge, and the clattering of his horse's hoofs was lost in the whistling of the night blast" (p. 204). That Irving can make us, at least for



a moment or two, believe that the stranger may indeed be the count's ghost is more than a minor achievement, considering the comedy that pervades the story. How is it, in the face of all the story's jesting, that a serious turn can develop so effectively? Perhaps there are two causes. First, the plot tension has built very effectively to this scene. We are not really sure what to expect. On the one hand if the stranger is Starkenfaust we expect him to reveal himself and we wonder how he will resolve the matter of his true identity. As the tone of the scene intensifies, our anticipation builds. What will he do? Certainly the announcement that he has a rendezvous with the worms takes us a bit by surprise. Is he possibly the count himself and not a masquerader? The seriousness then of this scene as contrasted to the humor of the previous one also effectively contributes to its credibility. The overall effect of this serious possibility is to create a tension for the story that is more than simply a plot tension.

The reader is thus, temporarily caught between what appears to be happening (Starkenfaust masquerading as the count) and the frightening possibility of what may really be happening (the actual appearance of the dead count). We recall then the Count's last words which are the first lines of dialogue in the story. Beseeching



Starkenfaust to carry word of his death to his bride, the count delivers a warning.

"Unless this is done," said he, "I shall not sleep quietly in my grave!" (p. 197)

Is it possible that Starkenfaust has failed to appear thus provoking the count himself to appear?

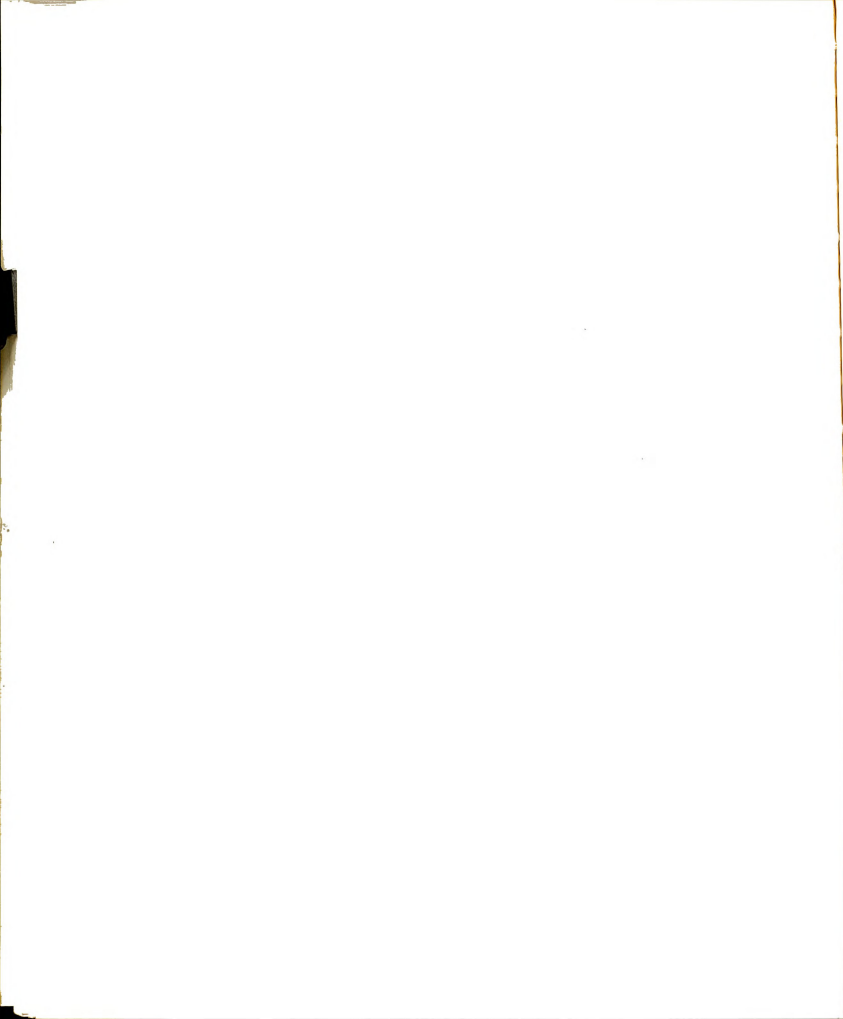
The implications which arise from this possibility are similar to those in the "Adventure of the German Student" from Tales of a Traveller. When the student discovers that he has pledged himself to a dead woman, the thematic significance of the story becomes both grotesque and horrifying. In "The Spectre Bridegroom" the bride's fascination and attraction to the spectre has overtones of that same kind of horror.

As to the young lady, there was something, even in the spectre of her lover, that seemed endearing. There was still the semblance of manly beauty; and though the shadow of a man is but little calculated to satisfy the affections of a love-sick girl, yet, where the substance is not to be had, even that is consoling. (pp. 205-06)

The possibility that the young bride may indeed have fallen in love with death is momentarily a chilling one.

These grotesque implications are soon undercut, however, by the revival of the narrative irony. When the spectre appears in the garden, the aunt's reaction is treated humorously.

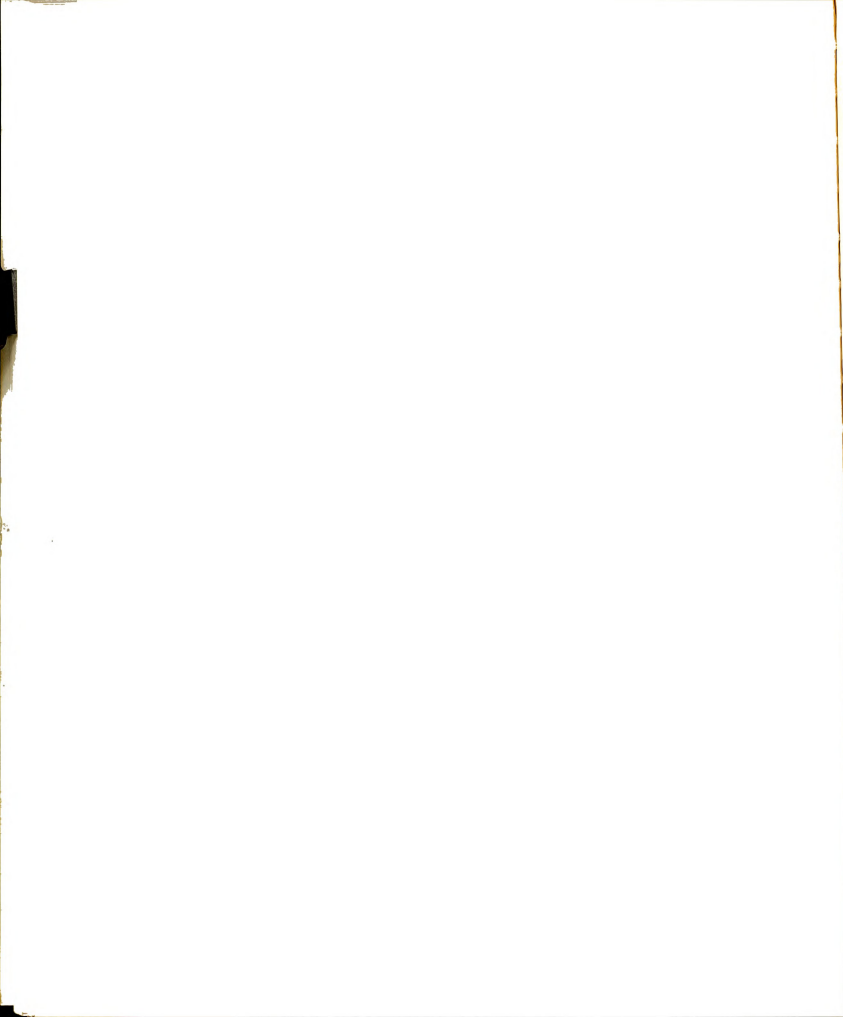
The aunt, who was one of the best tellers of ghost stories in all Germany, had just been recounting one of her longest, and had fallen asleep in the very midst of it. (p. 205)



She is not lulled to sleep by the appearance of an apparently real ghost, however. For when she sees the spectre, the aunt shrieks and collapses with fright. The humorous tone is sustained in the succeeding paragraph when we are informed that being sworn to secrecy, the aunt manages to remain silent for a few days. When the niece is discovered missing, however, the aunt immediately tells her story.

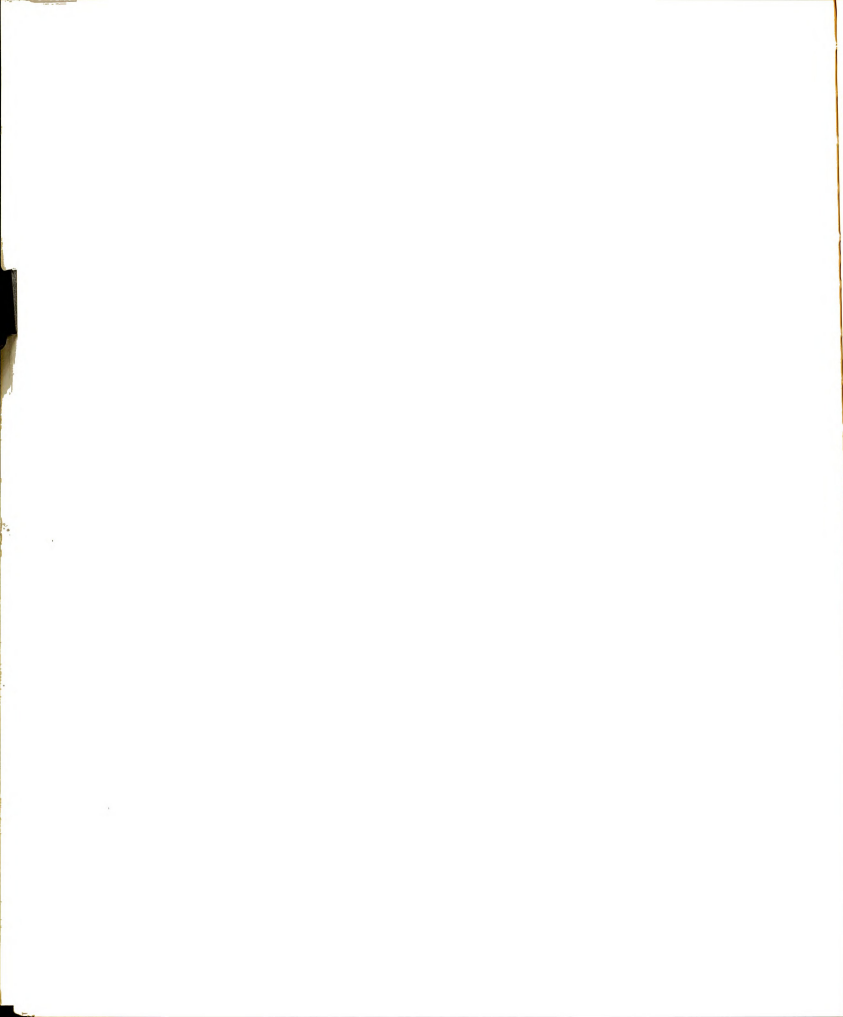
Once the Baron learns of his daughter's disappearance, the story moves rapidly and happily to its conclusion. The couple reappear, the spectre's true identity is revealed, the marriage is announced, and the pair are forgiven. The ending is so rapid, in fact, that it is indeed likely that Irving was satirizing the "solemn and ponderous style of the German stories of the time" (Reichart, p. 33).

Before concluding our examination of "The Spectre Bridegroom" it is important to discuss why, in spite of the obvious similarities of the two selections, "The Devil and Tom Walker" should be classified as a tale, while "The Spectre Bridegroom" should be considered a short story. Both selections are written in the humorous, ironic Knickerbocker style; both depend heavily on humor for their effects, and both poke fun at the habits of their characters. Finally, in neither selection are the characters fully developed.



The primary difference in the two works is one of emphasis and focus. In "The Devil and Tom Walker" the reader is torn between regarding Tom as a real person-- a semi-rounded character who struggles with his own fate-- and regarding Tom as a one-dimensional character who is the target of the ironic narrative voice. The impact of the tale's tension and conflict is thus dispersed, for both the potential plot tension and the character conflict are robbed of their power by the force of the undercutting narrative irony.

"The Spectre Bridegroom," however, succeeds where "Tom Walker" fails, for the former story integrates plot tension, ironic tension, and thematic tension--all of which are resolved by the appearance of the bride and the gallant cavalier. The characterization never detracts from the mounting tension and its eventual resolution. We are never encouraged to regard any of the characters in "Spectre" as undergoing a serious internal struggle, nor is such a struggle essential for the success of the story. Neither is an immediate dramatic realism essential, for the focus intentionally and explicitly is directed to the narrative irony--the humorous interpretation of events--rather than the events themselves, and to the ironic implications of character's behavior rather than to the behavior itself. Such narrative control contributes significantly to the success of "The Spectre Bridegroom."



Irving's reliance on narrative irony to provide tension is evident again in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." In this story, however, which is set in familiar territory, Irving marshalls vivid descriptive details to reinforce the tension and characterization and to elaborate his theme.

The thematic concerns of "Sleepy Hollow" have received considerable critical attention. Many critics regard the story as a significant American legend which dramatizes the inner conflicts of the American psyche.

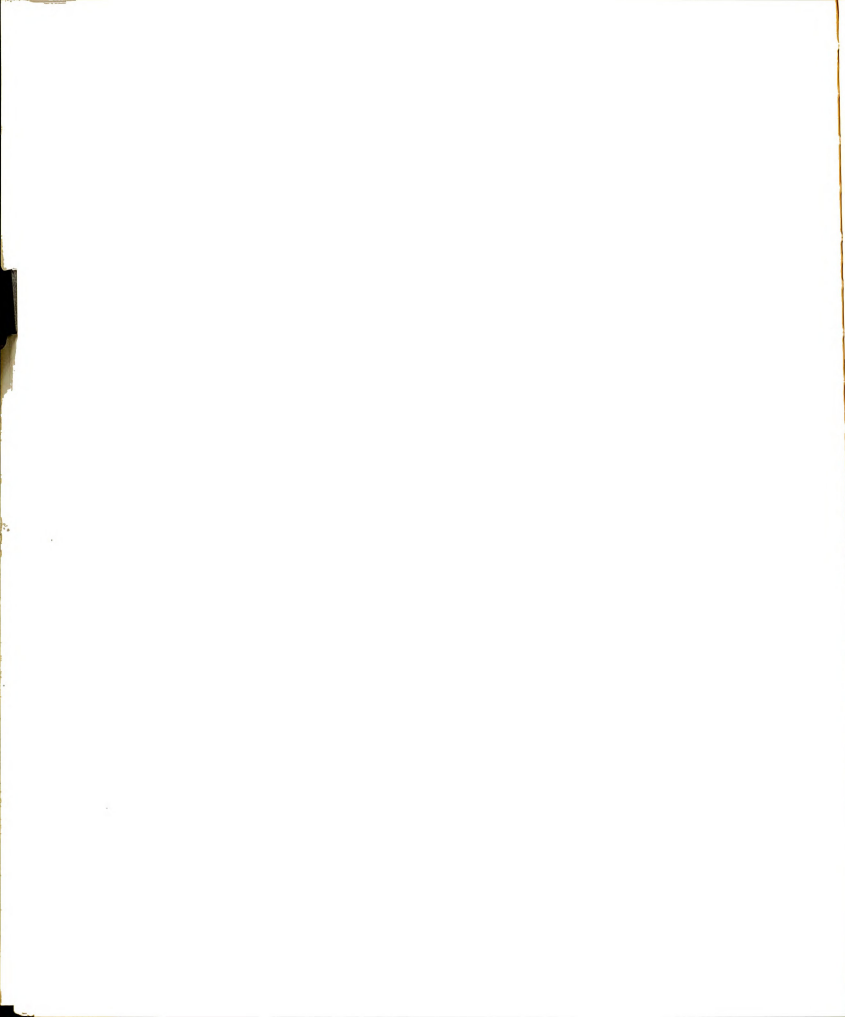
Daniel Hoffman sees the story as beginning the tradition of the "'poetic' non realistic American romance."⁵ These romances follow a predictable pattern:

Repeatedly the native hero is a metamorphic, self-reliant naif, akin to the Yankee or Frontiersman of popular tradition. Repeatedly he must define himself in conflict with a more stable ritual-figure or society reflecting the American inheritance of European culture and its burdens of historical responsibility. (p. xii)

Thus, Hoffman continues later Brom Bones "concocts the perfect backwoodsman's revenge on the Yankee" (p. 92).

Robert Bone sees the basic thematic conflict in "Legend" as the opposition between material prosperity and the poetic imagination. Despite Madison Avenue's pleas to "consume," Americans are hesitant. "Deep in the American psyche, it would seem, lies a curious

⁵Daniel Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. xii.



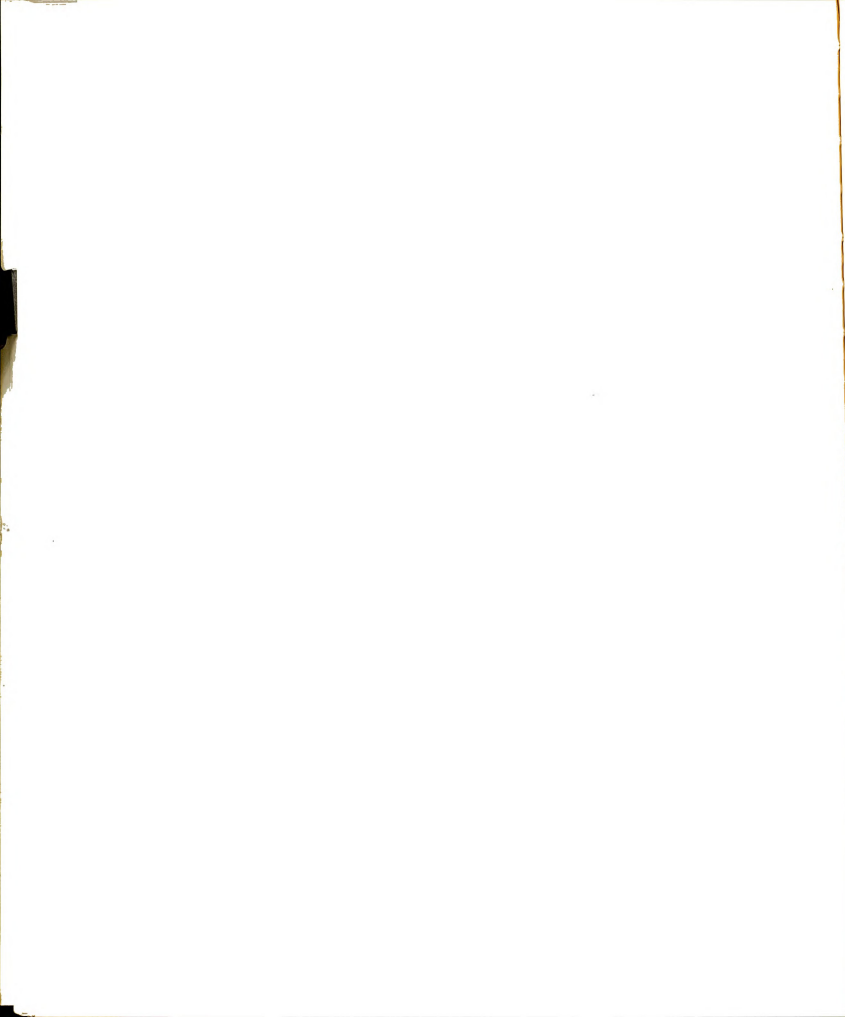
ambivalence toward the things of this world; a suspicion that material prosperity may be an impediment to the inner life."⁶ According to Bone, the threat that commodities make to the artistic process is the thematic focus of "Legend."

It is Washington Irving's distinction first to have explored this theme. His interest in folklore, myth and legend provides him, in his best work, with a means of confronting the prosaic temper of his time. The folk tale, with its elements of fable and of fantasy, is an ideal medium, and it is here that Irving's creative powers reach fulfillment. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is at once his finest achievement and his most enduring contribution to our literary history. For in the mythic encounter of Ichabod Crane and the Headless Horseman, the crisis of the modern imagination is first revealed. (Bone, p. 169)

Terence Martin interprets the story as reflecting the "tension between imaginative endeavor and cultural tendency."⁷ According to Martin the new American nation saw itself as "fresh and innocent" yet at the same time it "desired to elicit confidence from within and without by assuming an immediate adulthood in the family of nations" (p. 137). This impulse toward adulthood had an adverse effect on the creative imagination for it treated poetry and art as childish. Martin quotes Reverend James Gray, a trustee of the Philadelphia

⁶Robert Bone, "Irving's Headless Hessian: Prosperity and the Inner Life," AQ, 15 (1963), 167.

⁷Terence Martin, "Rip, Ichabod and The American Imagination," AL, 31 (1959), 140.



Academy of Young Ladies in 1810, who maintained that childhood is "the time for imaginative indulgence; adulthood brings with it a demand for fact and doctrine" (pp. 138-39). Irving, in an attempt to avoid the adult reality of America retreats in "Legend" to a "never-never land":

The wide-awake reader, dwelling in the "broad and simple daylight of the actual world, is invited to enter Irving's sleepy region, . . . to dream there under the bewitching influence of fictional apparitions. (pp. 142-43)

Ichabod's childishness, Martin continues later, is emphasized by his oral preoccupation. "Throughout the tale Irving plays on the idea of Ichabod's tremendous appetite and his 'capacious swallow.'" The price Ichabod pays for his childishness is the double prize of Katrina and the wealth of the Van Tassel farm" (p. 143). Brom Bones' victory thus is "a victory for common sense and hard-headed practicality over imaginative indulgence" (p. 144).

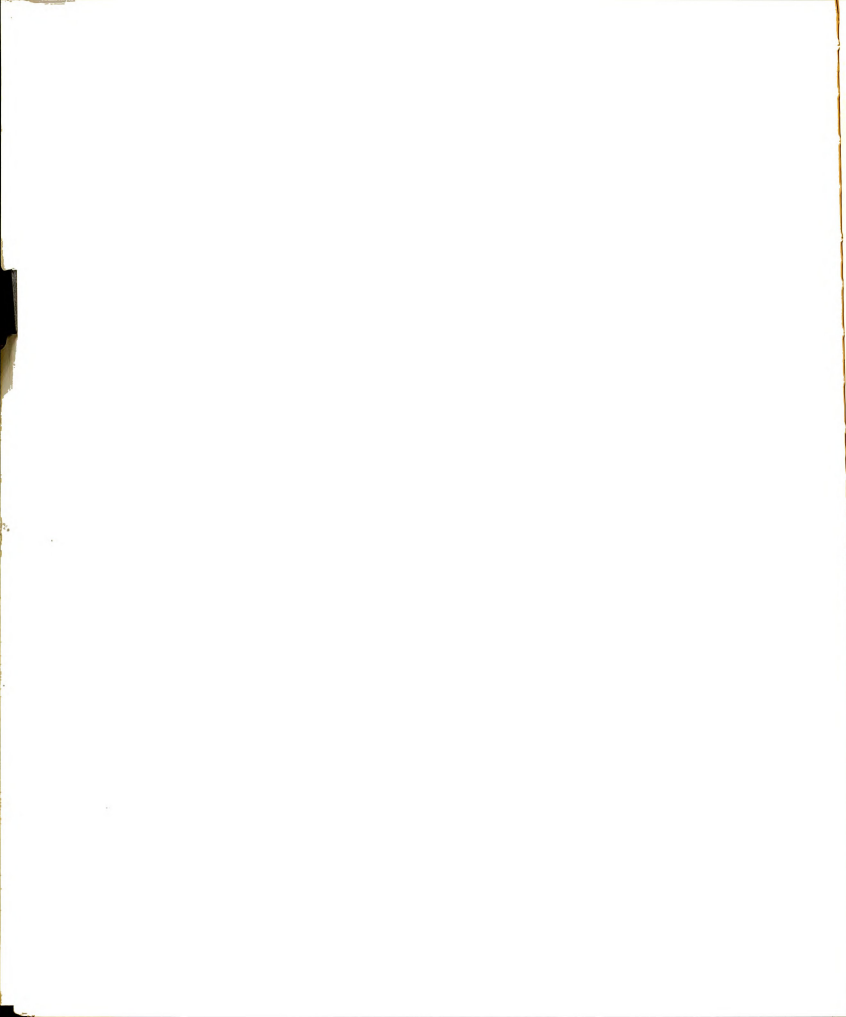
These interpretations are not mutually exclusive and each contributes to our fuller understanding of the story--especially its thematic concerns. What is overlooked--or at least only touched upon by most critics--is the structural and technical aspects of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" as a short story. Regardless of whether we view the story as a conflict between the materialism and imagination, between practicality and imagination;



or as a contest between a self-reliant innocent and a stable ritual figure, the thematic meaning could not succeed without the technical achievement evident in the structure and the vivid use of detail. As a short story "Sleepy Hollow" offers another interesting study, for it like "The Spectre Bridegroom" succeeds as a short story even though it contains some of the weaknesses previously attributed to the tale. The narrative voice intrudes frequently and we are often removed from the drama. There is little evidence of internal conflict or character development, little direct dramatization, and almost no dialogue. What enables the story to succeed is the ironic humor of the narrative voice and the vivid use of details.

The emphasis on detail is first apparent in the opening descriptions of the setting. For the introductory description of Sleepy Hollow, like that of the landscape in "Rip Van Winkle," establishes the atmosphere of unreality which makes Ichabod's fears credible.

From the listless repose of the place, and the peculiar character of its inhabitants, who are descendants from the original Dutch settlers, this sequestered glen has long been known by the name of Sleepy Hollow, and its rustic lads are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys throughout all the neighboring country. 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. (p. 417)



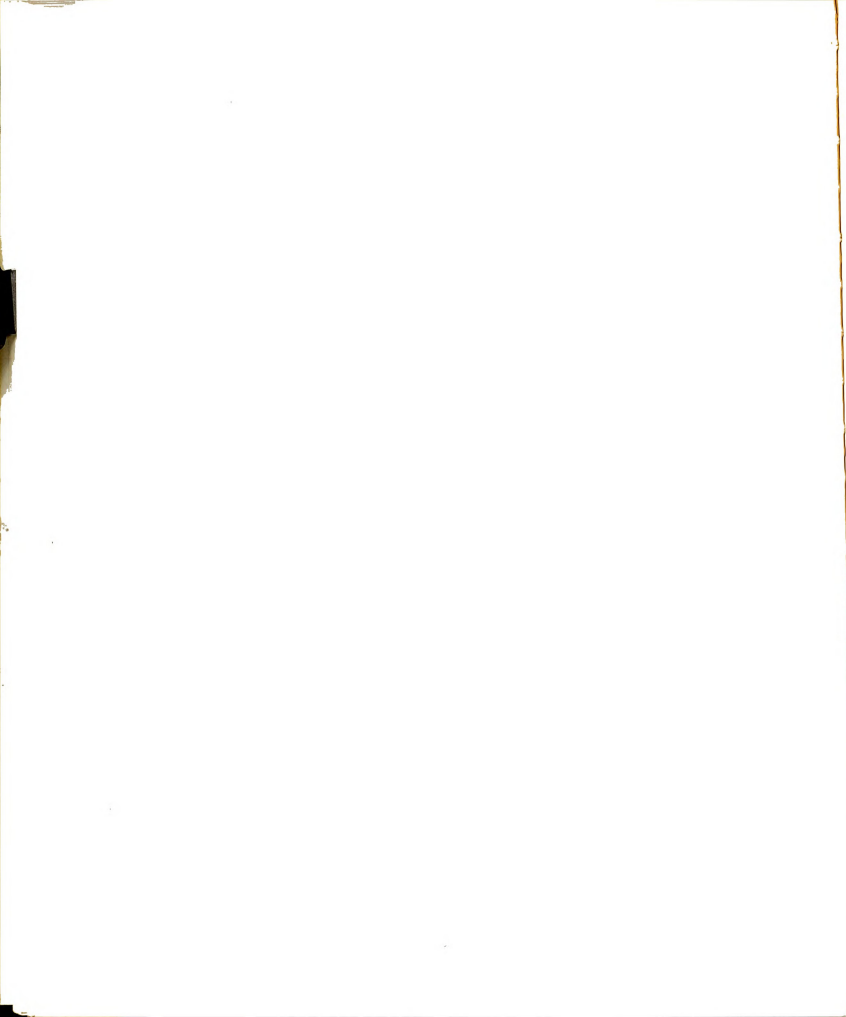
After several paragraphs which describe the superstitions surrounding the headless horseman, the narrator continues to characterize the inhabitants of Sleepy Hollow:

It is remarkable that the visionary propensity I have mentioned is not confined to the native inhabitants of the valley, but is unconsciously imbibed by every one who resides there for a time. However wide awake they may have been before, they entered that sleepy region, they are sure, in a little time, to inhale the witching influence of the air, and begin to grow imaginative--to dream dreams, and see apparitions. (p. 419)

Once the setting has been established, the next several pages are devoted to the characterization of Ichabod.

Though Ichabod does not really develop as a character, he too is rendered in vivid, often ironic, detail. The irony prevents us from taking him too seriously for he is always on the verge of being regarded as an object of ridicule. He is in fact a caricature. Hoffman maintains that Ichabod is indeed "the bumpkin's caricature of what life in the sea of a corrupt civilization can make of a man" (p. 94). When we are first introduced to Ichabod, we are told that "the cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable to his person" (pp. 419-20).

He was 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, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weather-cock, perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering



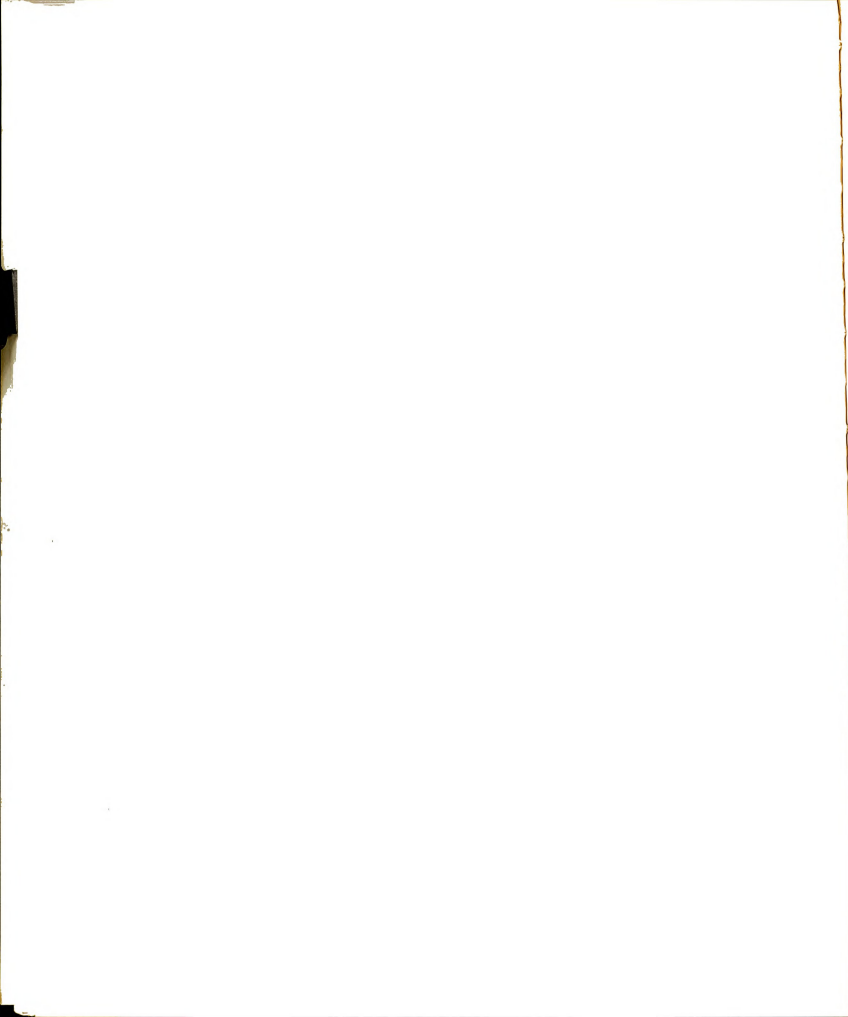
about him, one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield. (p. 420)

Not only Crane, but the name Ichabod, too, shapes our response to the schoolmaster, for Ichabod is Hebrew; it means "inglorious," or literally "without honor" (Bone, p. 173).

Later in the story Ichabod's physical appearance is again treated comically when he is described astride his horse.

Ichabod was a suitable figure for such a steed. He rode with short stirrups, which brought his knees nearly up to the pommel of the saddle; his sharp elbows stuck out like grasshoppers'; he carried his whip perpendicularly in his hand, like a sceptre, and, as his horse jogged on, the motion of his arms was not unlike the flapping of a pair of wings. (pp. 436-37)

The list of comparisons, however, does not end with weather-cock, scarecrow, or grasshopper. In regard to his eating habits we are told he "had the dilating powers of an anaconda" (p. 421). When he dances at the quilting party, he is compared to "Saint Vitus himself, that blessed patron of the dance" (p. 441). Such comparisons, though they may win our sympathy, tend to make it impossible for us to regard Ichabod seriously. The absurdity suggested by these comparisons is further reinforced by the knight simile which runs throughout the story. The first mention of it is when we are told of the difficulties facing Ichabod as he attempts to win Katrina's affections.

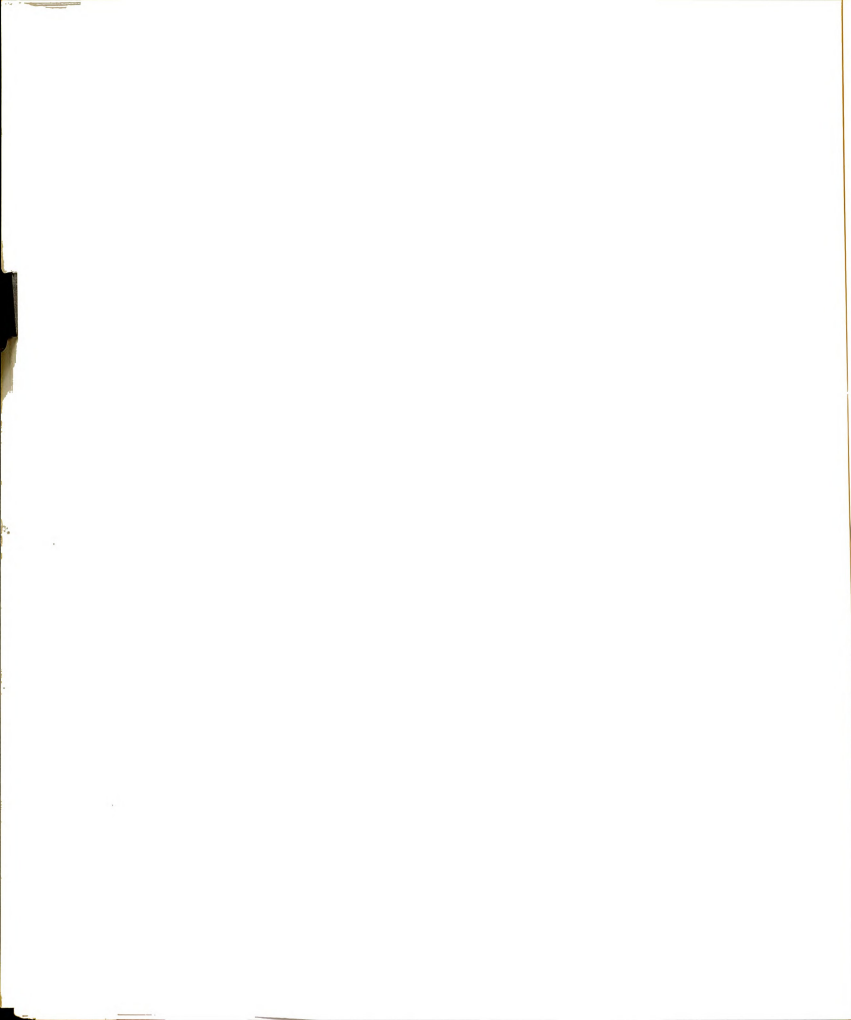


In this enterprise, however, he had more real difficulties than generally fell to the lot of a knight-errant of yore, who seldom had any thing but giants, enchanters, fiery dragons, and such like easily-conquered adversaries, to contend with; and had to make his way merely through gates of iron and brass, and walls of adamant, to the castle keep. (p. 430)

The comparison is intensified in sportive style when Ichabod is described astride his horse.

That he might make his appearance before his mistress in the true style of a cavalier, he borrowed a horse from the farmer with whom he was domiciliated, a choleric old Dutchman, of the name of Hans Van Ripper, and, thus gallantly mounted, issued forth, like a knight-errant in quest of adventures. (p. 436)

Not all of Ichabod's humor arises from his physical appearance, however. The fact that his attitudes and behavior are often motivated by self-interest and desire for material gain is also a source of humor. When there is little at stake, Ichabod demonstrates a sensitivity to his weaker students. "He administered justice with discrimination rather than severity; taking the burthen off the backs of the weak and laying it on those of the strong" (p. 421). Yet he makes a point of keeping on good terms with the students after school--especially those "who happened to have pretty sisters, or good housewives for mothers, noted for the comforts of the cupboard" (p. 421). Perhaps we cannot too severely criticize Ichabod for this, however, since he was not able to live on the income from his school.



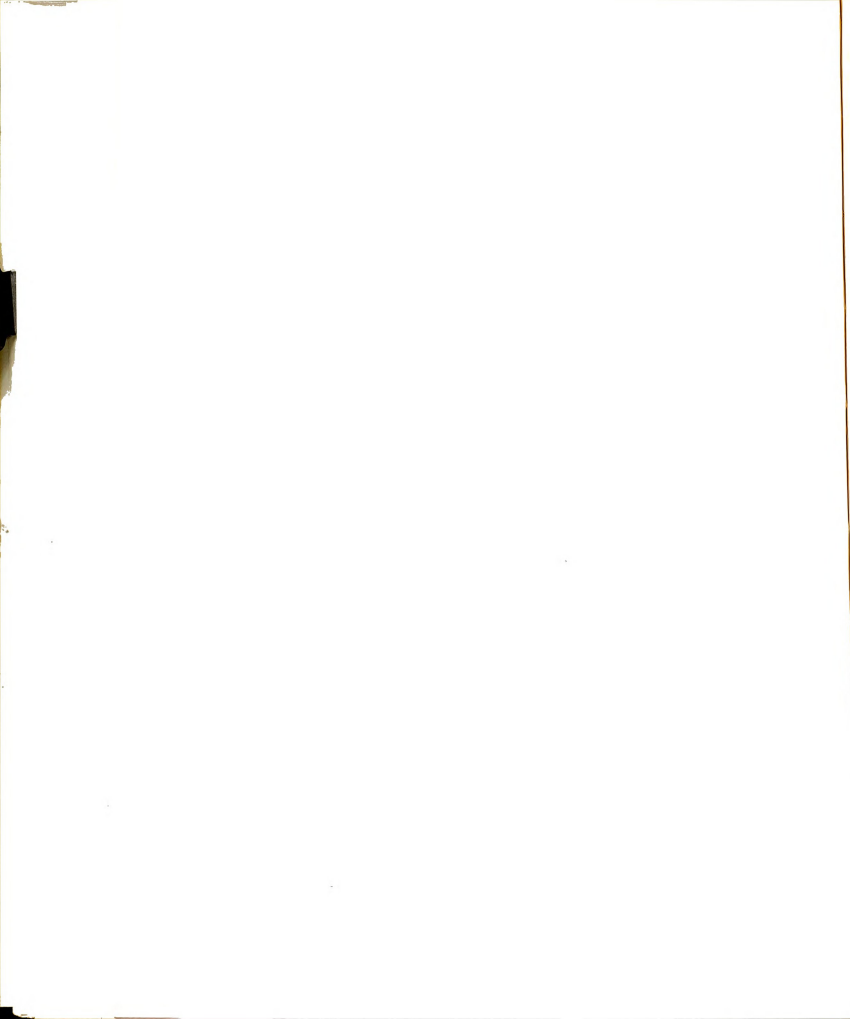
Even more humorous and perhaps less admirable is his reaction to the Van Tassel farm and his desire to gain possession of the farm which he cloaks under the ruse of courting Katrina. No where does he say he loves her. Hoffman, in fact, maintains that Ichabod knows only two emotions: fear and ambition.

The narrative voice, however, does not allow us to dwell long on Ichabod's deficiencies. Instead we focus on his capacity to appreciate material abundance. Here Irving draws heavily on the setting to aid the characterization of the schoolmaster, for the humor of Ichabod's ambition is intensified by the contrast between the narrative description of the farm and Ichabod's exaggerated reaction to it. Ichabod is indeed overwhelmed by the Van Tassel farm.

The pedagogue's mouth watered, as he looked upon this sumptuous promise of luxurious winter fare. In his devouring mind's eye, he pictures 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 cosily in dishes, like snug married couples, with a decent competency of onion sauce. (p. 428)

A similar response is evoked the night of the quilting party. On the way to Van Tassel's, Ichabod dreams of food. Everything he sees is transformed into food.

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

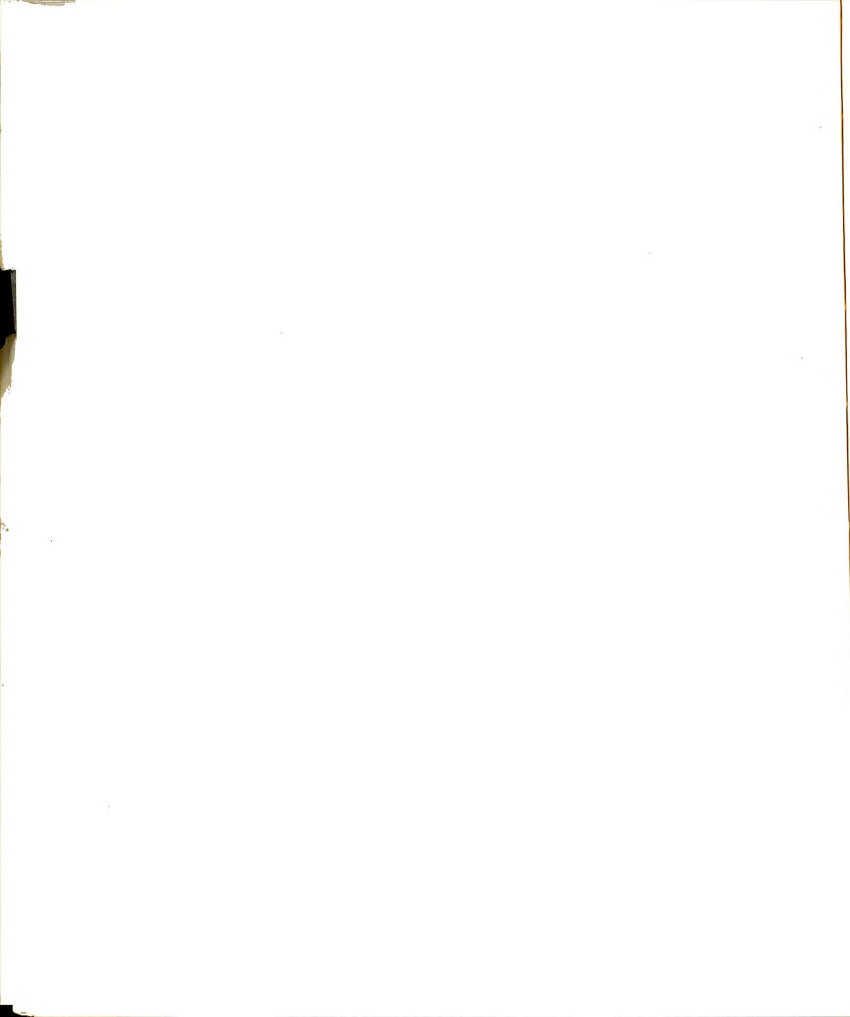


all sides he beheld vast store of apples; some hanging in oppressive opulence on the trees; some gathered into baskets and barrels for the market; others heaped up in rich piles for the cider-press. Farther on he beheld great fields of Indian corn, with its golden ears peeping from their leafy coverts, and holding out the promise of cakes and hasty pudding. (p. 438)

When Ichabod enters the farmhouse he once again sees his surroundings in culinary terms. The narrative voice removes us from him and allows us to chuckle at him without making us feel we are in any way betraying him.

Fain would I pause to dwell upon the world of charms that burst upon the enraptured gaze of my hero, as he entered the state parlor of Van Tassel's mansion. Not those of the bevy of buxom lasses, with their luxurious display of red and white; but the ample charms of a genuine Dutch country tea-table, in the sumptuous time of autumn. Such heaped-up platters of cakes of various and almost indescribable kinds, known only to experienced Dutch housewives! There was the doughty dough-nut, the tenderer oly koek, and the crisp and crumbling cruller; sweet cakes and short cakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes, and the whole family of cakes. (p. 440)

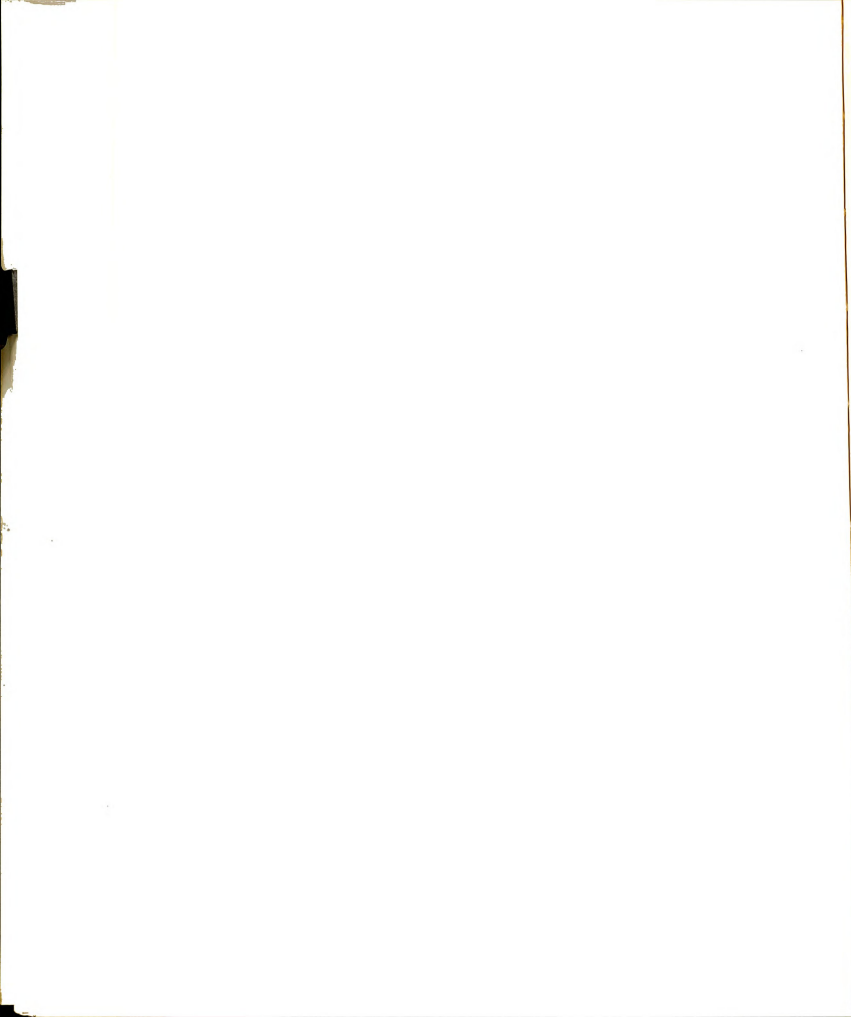
Indeed Martin's contention that Ichabod is characterized by his "powers of digesting" (p. 143), both food and mysterious tales, is fully supported by a close reading of the story. If, however, we view Ichabod simply as a childish character--even a caricature--preoccupied with imagination, who meets his defeat because of his impracticality or innocence, we miss the richness of the implications involved in his characterization. For Ichabod is characterized as a curious mixture of the artist-intellect (who is innocent and imaginative) and the ambitious materialist. He occupies the social and professional



position of the intellectual; he is the village school-master. And in this village such a position is treated with disdain and minimum reward. Ichabod is thus forced to compromise himself in order to survive.

But circumstances are not the only motivating force for his behavior. Ichabod is in part "defeated from within" as Bone contends (p. 183). His ambition and material desires are so overwhelming as to suggest that they indeed are innate and not produced merely by the conditions of his existence. When his imagination suggests that he might, by marrying Katrina, sell the farm, run off to Kentucky, and treat other school masters as he has been treated, we question his integrity. He is indeed a turn coat--"without honor"--as his name indicates. Or as Hoffman maintains, he is a "sorry symbol of learning" (p. 94).

Ichabod's struggle, then, is not to maintain his intellectual integrity. When the possibility of escaping his role as schoolmaster arises, he grabs at it eagerly. His struggle is rather to win material comforts. What prevents him from achieving his goal is his imagination. It is not so much then that Ichabod's ambition prevents him from preserving his intellectual honor, but rather that his imagination prevents him from achieving his materialistic desires. That the materialistic aspect of his character is dominant is demonstrated by his

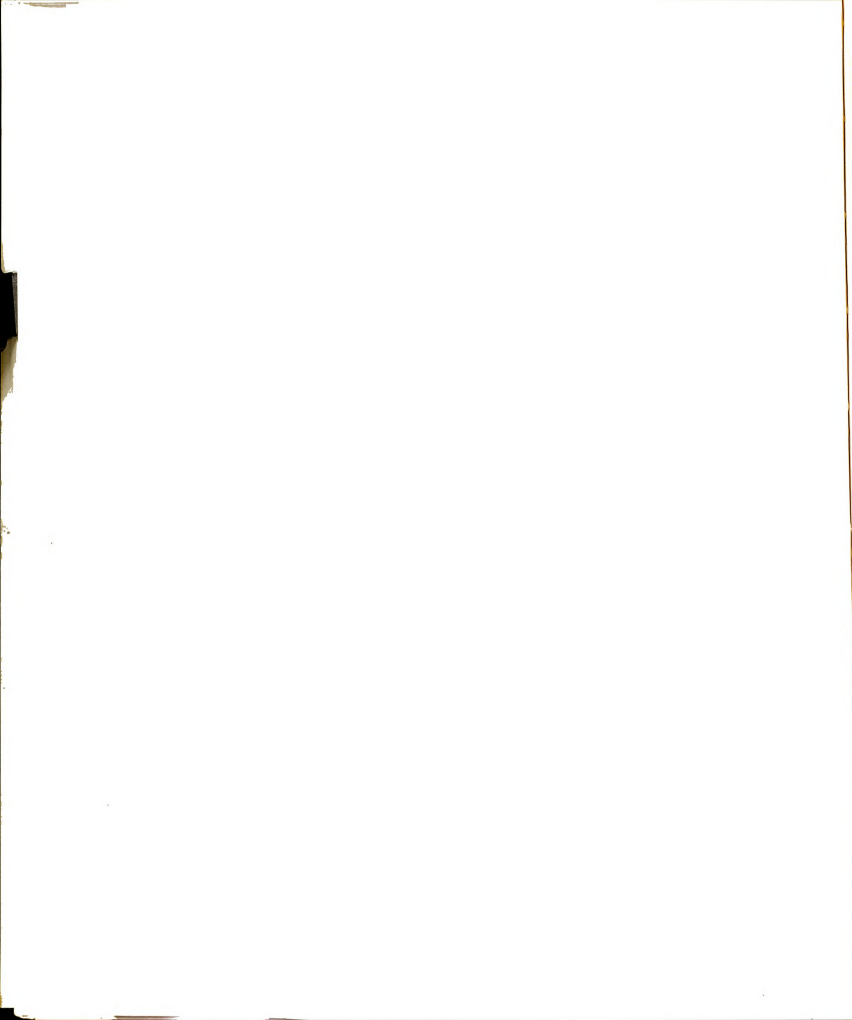


later success in the city. Ichabod is indeed a misplaced man. He is not an intellectual at all and thus he is unable to function adequately in the role.

As a short story, then, there are several sources of tension and conflict evident in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." There is the ironic contrast between who Ichabod is supposed to be and who he really is. There is a tension created by the plot conflict between Brom and Ichabod. And there is a tension between the mysterious tales, the supernatural atmosphere, and the fears of Ichabod's imagination. All these tensions are skillfully resolved in the climactic scene of the chase which culminates in the catapulting pumpkin.

The tension begins to build when the tales are told at the party and people begin to leave. The atmosphere sobers. The stories "sank deep in the mind of Ichabod" (p. 445). As the crowd disperses the "lighthearted laughter, mingling with the clatter of hoofs, echoed along the silent woodlands, sounding fainter and fainter until they gradually died away--and the late scene of noise and frolic was all silent and deserted" (p. 445). Ichabod's unsuccessful interview with Katrina contributes to the change in atmosphere and the surroundings complement Ichabod's mood.

It was the very witching time of night that Ichabod, heavy-hearted and crest-fallen, pursued his travel homewards, along the sides of the lofty hills which rise above Tarry Town, and which he had traversed



so cheerily in the afternoon. The hour was as dismal as himself. Far below him, the Tappan Zee spread its dusky and indistinct waste of waters, with here and there the tall mast of a sloop, riding quietly at anchor under the land. In the dead hush of midnight, he could even hear the barking of the watch dog from the opposite shore of the Hudson; but it was so vague and faint as only to give an idea of his distance from this faithful companion of man. (p. 446)

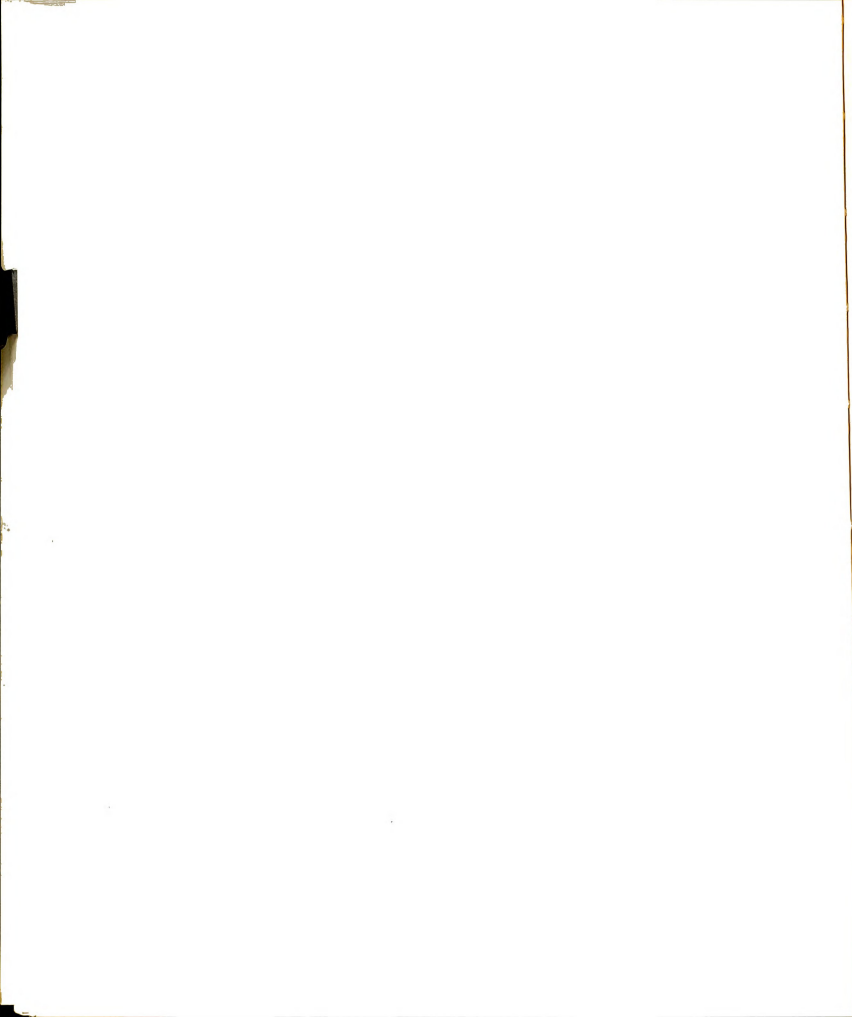
Much of the tension in this last section of the story depends on the setting. The combination of the setting, the legend of the headless horseman, and Ichabod's vividly fearful imagination contributes an immediacy and tension to the journey home. The comic knight errant metaphor used earlier is extended as Ichabod approaches the bridge. "To pass this bridge was the severest trial" (p. 448), and Ichabod's reaction is both intense and humorous.

As he approached the stream his heart began to thump; he summoned up, however, all his resolution, gave his horse half a score of kicks in the ribs, and attempted to dash briskly across the bridge; but instead of starting forward, the perverse old animal made a lateral movement, and ran broadside against the fence. (p. 448)

Yet in spite of the humor of Ichabod's fear we also share some of his terror.

Just at this moment a plashy tramp by the side of the bridge caught the sensitive ear of Ichabod. In the dark shadow of the grove, on the margin of the brook, he beheld something huge, misshapen, black and towering. It stirred not, but seemed gathered up in the gloom, like some gigantic monster ready to spring upon the traveller. (pp. 448-49)

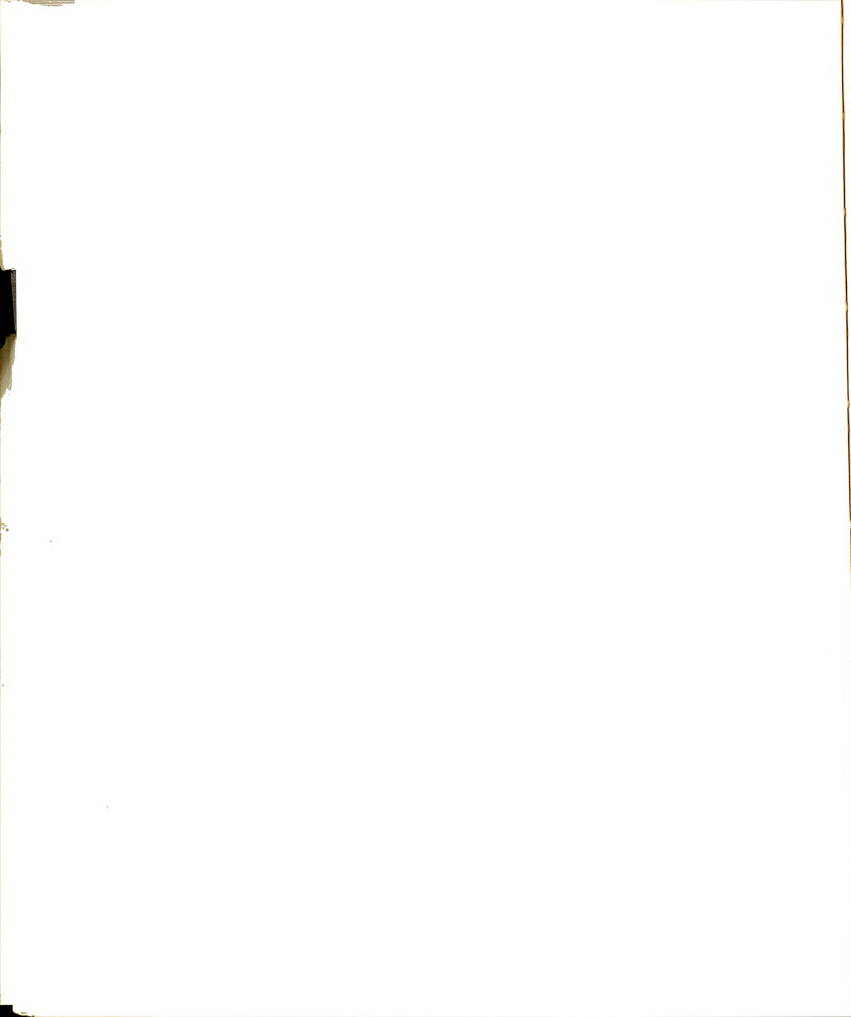
Once Ichabod spots the headless horseman, the chase is on and the tension increases.



Away then they dashed, through thick and thin; stones flying, and sparks flashing at every bound. Ichabod's flimsy garments fluttered in the air, as he stretched his long lank body away over his horse's head, in the eagerness of his flight. (p. 450)

The chase reaches its climax when the horseman hurls his head at the retreating schoolmaster. ("It encountered his cranium with a tremendous crash" p. 451.) It is not a head which is found the next day, however, but a shattered pumpkin. The climax, thus, most appropriately reveals Ichabod's inadequacy. As Robert Bones points out, "The organ of intellect and imagination has become an edible. The forces of thought have yielded to the forces of digestion" (p. 174). It is suitable that the organ of intellect should have become an edible, for Ichabod would gladly have sacrificed whatever intellect he had for his consumptive desires. So eagerly, in fact, would he surrender that the question arises as to whether there was ever any contest at all.

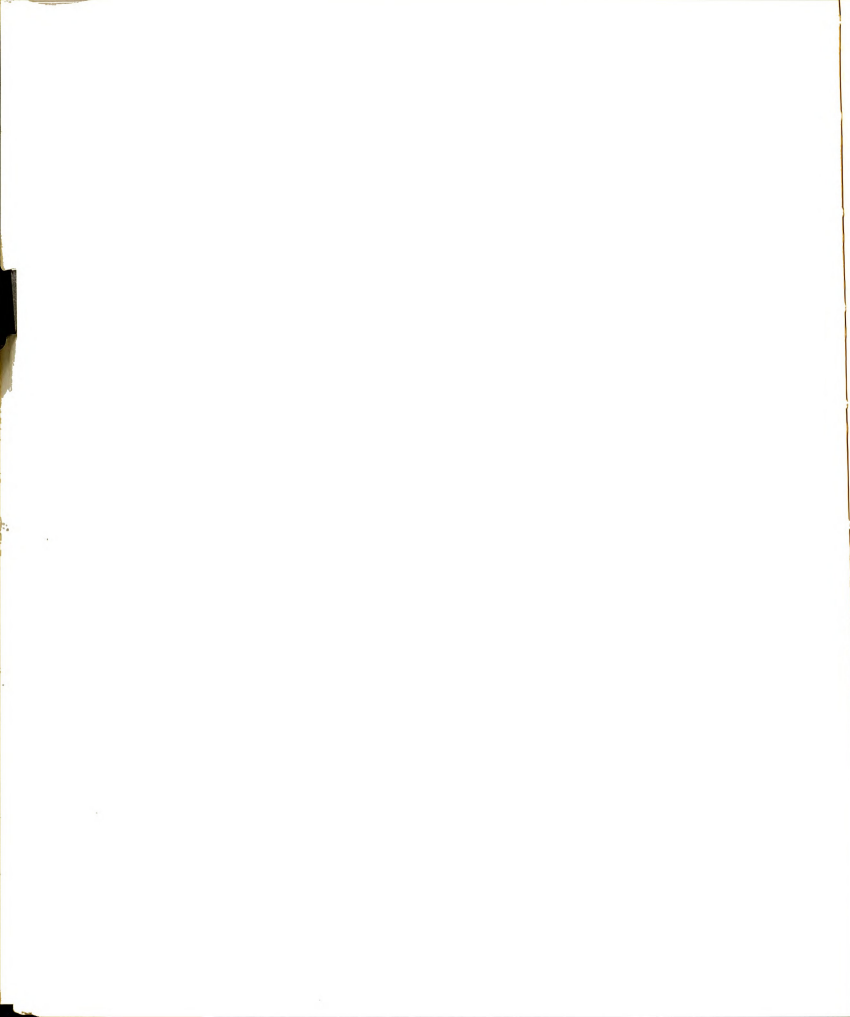
The success of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" then depends primarily upon the elements of characterization, plot tension, setting, and narrative irony. These elements are skillfully and efficiently controlled. The setting, for instance, is not used simply to establish the mood of the story, as is often the case in the sketches. In "Legend" the setting also contributes significantly to the plot tension and the characterization of Ichabod. The narrative irony, which is consistently



maintained, helps unify the story and effectively shapes the reader's response to the characters and events. The details of the story are carefully chosen and skillfully integrated to dramatize the struggle and defeat of Ichabod Crane. The artistic control evident in the story, in fact, qualifies it not only as one of Irving's best works, but as a significant contribution to the American literary tradition.

As a short story "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is indeed a classic, but it is matched--perhaps surpassed by--"Rip Van Winkle." Ironically enough "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Wife" (discussed in Chapter I) were in the first installment of The Sketch Book published in America--ironic because "Rip" is so much more significant as a creative achievement. Even the contemporary reviews of The Sketch Book praised the story, though some critics attacked Irving for his lack of originality. More recently Henry Pochmann has clearly demonstrated the source of "Rip Van Winkle" to be a German tale, "Peter Klaus" from Otmar's Volksagen (p. 494). Some passages in "Rip" are almost literal translations of the German tales. Yet Pochmann is quick to point out the original aspects of Irving's story:

In the first place, it is fully four times as long as its German source. Otmar was interested, of course, primarily in collecting folk materials and only secondarily in the telling of them; Irving, on the other hand, had a storyteller's technique in mind. First, he must localize the tale,--lay



its scene in New York, some miles up the Hudson in a quaint old Dutch community; he must fit his characters to their parts, and especially, to their locality; and he must tell the story in his own humorous Knickerbocker style. (p. 494)

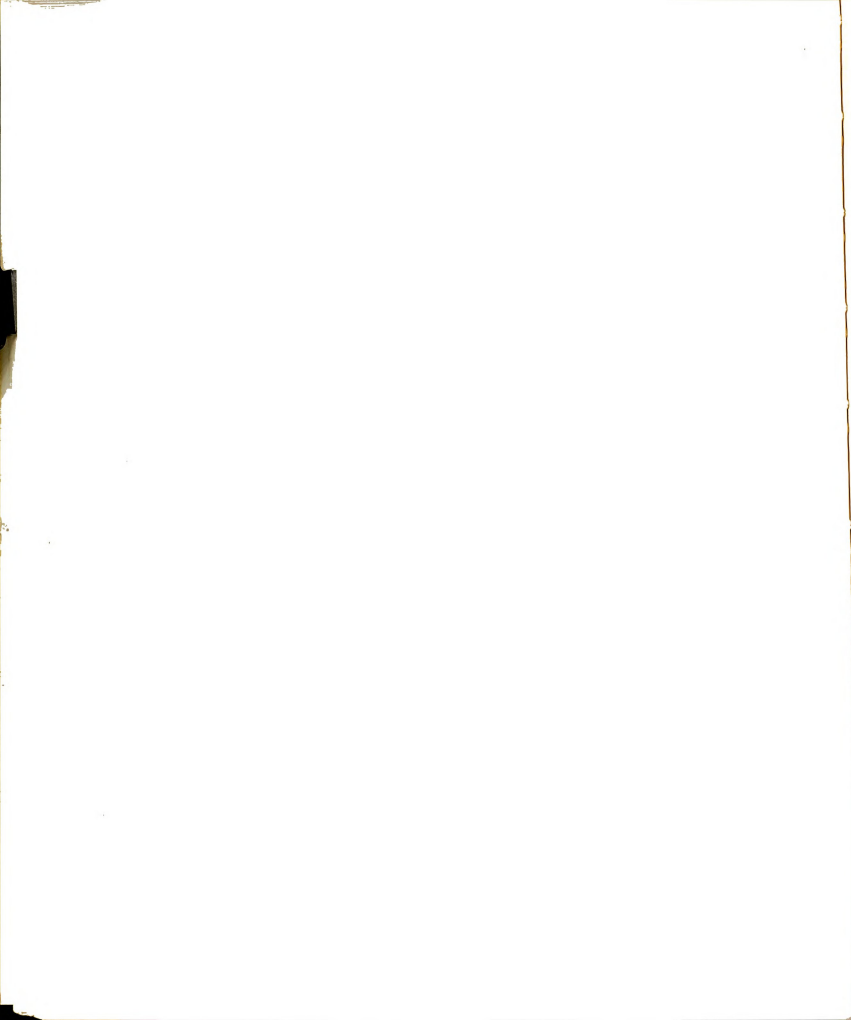
Dame Van Winkle's role in the story is also an original contribution. Pochmann concludes that Irving's borrowings do not detract at all from his originality.

The fact that Irving borrowed the substance of his story detracts no more from the originality of Irving as an artist than does Shakespeare's borrowing his plots make him a less original poet. (p. 495)

The originality of the story is no longer of major importance to the critics. Like "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" much of "Rip Van Winkle's" popularity stems from its thematic concerns.

Most of the modern critical responses to "Rip Van Winkle" emphasize the thematic implications of Rip's "loss of identity." Terence Martin connects this theme with the contrast between Rip's imaginative qualities and the practicality of the new nation which is created while he sleeps:

Irving does not exact the full penalty from Rip; he allows him to settle in a corner of this world, but with a function extremely limited and marginal. Nonetheless, the tale dramatizes Rip's loss of identity, and, by inference, the loss of identity of the imaginative function. Rip's miraculous sleep has left him ignorant of the American Revolution--the magical, the marvelous, the imaginative, and the indolent have had no place in the founding of the new republic. And when these qualities return in the person of an antique but childlike man, there arises a sense of embarrassment overcome only when he is known to be harmless, one who will not interfere. (p. 142)



William Hedges also emphasizes Rip's loss of identity; while Philip Young is more explicit about what Rip has avoided in his sleep.

It is clear now that Rip escaped no change of life, but his very manhood--went from childhood to second childhood with next to nothing in between. It is not just his wife he had dodged, either, but all the obligations of maturity: occupation, domestic and financial responsibility, a political position, duty to society in a time of war.⁸

"Rip Van Winkle's" emphasis on leisure time is emphasized by Louis Le Fevre who regards the legends of Paul Bunyan and Rip Van Winkle as the two contrasting methods by which Americans seek satisfaction.⁹ Paul Bunyan "embodies the drive of impotent mankind for power" (p. 66); he "represents the conscious ambition of Americans to do great deeds, exaggerated to fantasy" (p. 69). Rip, on the other hand, represents the opposition to hard work and self denial; he represents the "desire of men for ease and liesure" (p. 70).

The conflict between Paul and Rip goes on within the mind and emotions of every American. All men have some degree of ambition for achievement and some measure of desire for ease. This conflict can never find a final solution; like other struggles which involve the individual libido, it will be resolved most effectively when it is exposed to the full light of consciousness. (LeFevre, pp. 70-71)

⁸Philip Young, "Fallen From Time: The Mythic Rip Van Winkle," KR, 22 (1960), 570.

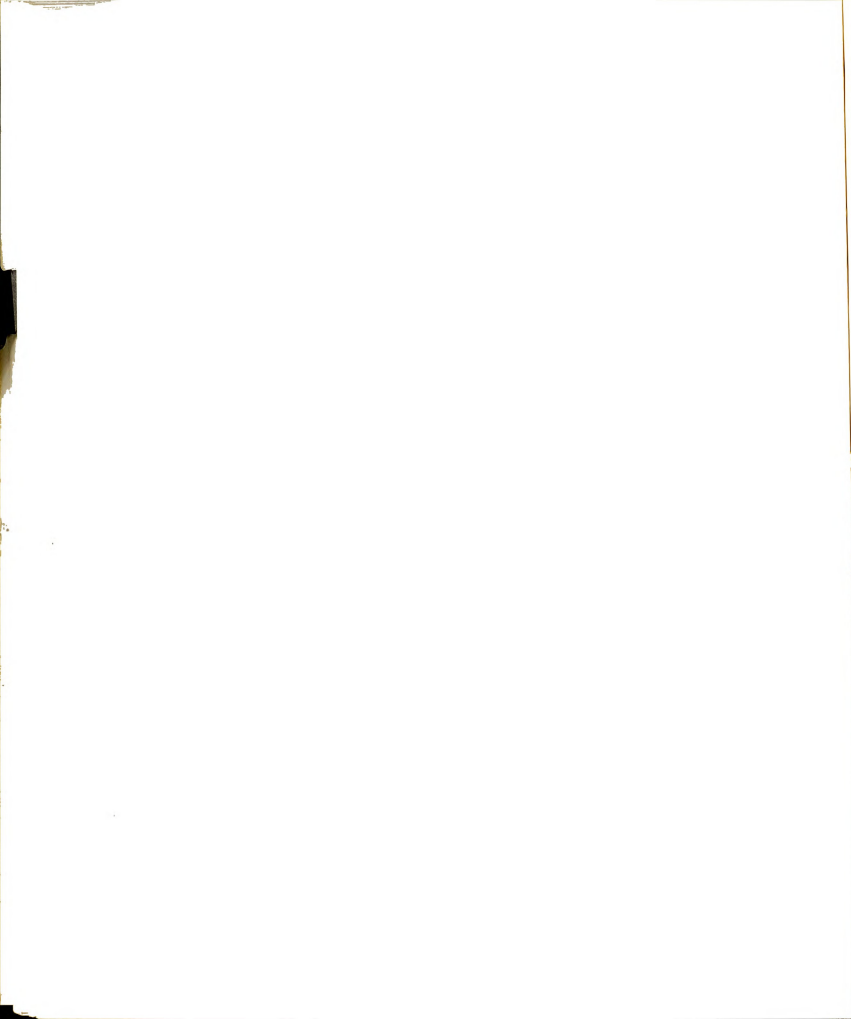
⁹Louis LeFevre, "Paul Bunyan and Rip Van Winkle," YR, 36 (1946), 66.



Undoubtedly Rip's desire to escape, his need for relaxation, and his partial sense of loss once he has indeed escaped contribute greatly to the story's thematic appeal. Yet the strength of the story lies not only in its thematic implications but also with its structural brilliance. Why Irving, so early in The Sketch Book, the first of his collections, was able to craft such a skillful story, and why he was never able to match it (except perhaps for "Sleepy Hollow") is not known. Yet it is undoubtedly true that the later development of the American short story owes a good deal to "Rip Van Winkle." For both these reasons, then, its status as Irving's best work and its contribution to the development of the American short story, "Rip Van Winkle" deserves close critical examination.

In "Rip Van Winkle" when Irving removes Crayon as narrator he also removes many narrative weaknesses. We no longer have Crayon's presence separating us from the action of the story as we do in the sketches. We do not view events through his detachment nor are the crucial events summarized for us. "Rip," in fact, can be viewed as evidence that Irving was capable of precise dramatization and narrative control.

As in "The Spectre Bridegroom" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" the narrative control in "Rip Van Winkle" is one of its major achievements. Its shaping

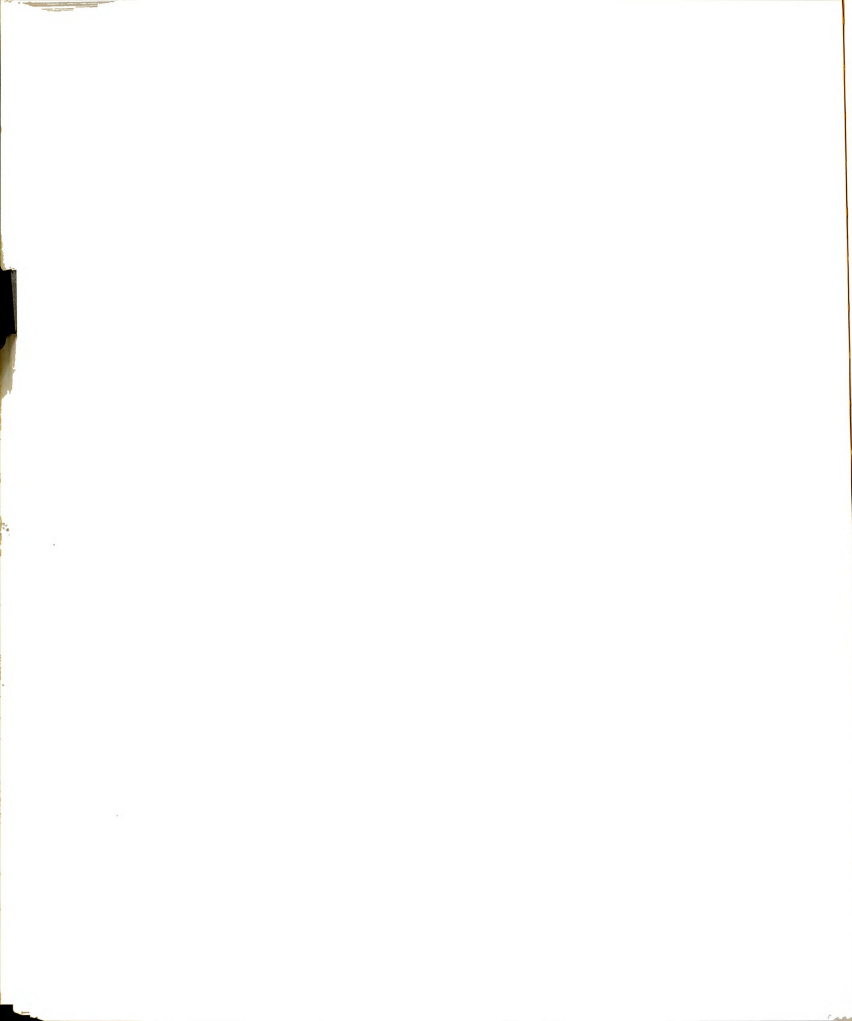


influence is perhaps most evident in the early descriptive part of the story. One of the major functions of the voice is to establish the tone and mood of the story. We are prepared by the description of setting for the possibility of unusual happenings. The description of setting is presented objectively but with the third paragraph, in which Rip and his circumstances are introduced, the irony begins. After describing Rip as a "good-natured fellow" who is beset upon by a nagging wife, the narrative voice suggests that the public meekness of hen-pecked husbands is developed because,

. . . their tempers, doubtless are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation; and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termigant wife may, therefore, in some respects be considered a tolerable blessing; and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed. (pp. 46-47)

Indeed almost all the references to Rip's situation early in the story are laced with humor and irony. Rip's irresponsibility is described in an ironic tone, with the narrative voice carefully pointing out the apparent inconsistency in Rip's behavior.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. (p. 47)



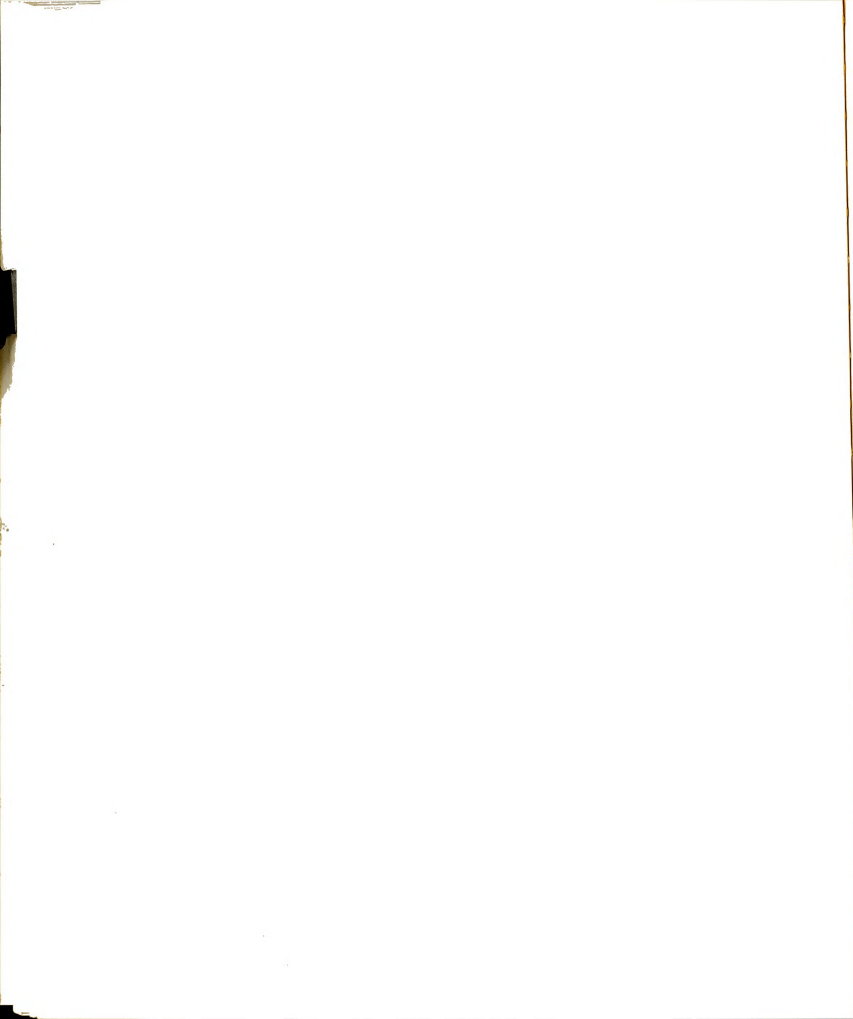
Rip is thus established as a likeable but "shiftless" fellow who wins our sympathy but is also the object of narrative humor.

The lightness of tone is further reinforced by the description of the village patriarch, Nicholas Vedder, who each day from morning to night took a seat at the door of the inn "just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial" (p. 50). Even Rip's twenty-year sleep does not remove the narrative irony, as is evident from the political humor evoked by Rip's ignorance. Perhaps one of the most pointed examples of the narrative irony following the sleep is demonstrated when Rip--once he learns how much time has passed--asks for his wife's whereabouts in a "faltering voice."

The use of narrative irony not only contributes to the mood of the story, it also is effectively employed indirectly to guide the reader's reaction. The narrative does not simply draw conclusions for us; rather it presents information in such a way that we draw our own conclusions. Such indirect guidance is evident early in the story when Rip's steadily disintegrating situation is established. At first, though he is nagged and burdened, he is able to escape by fishing or doing odd jobs for the neighbor women. In time, however, he is forced

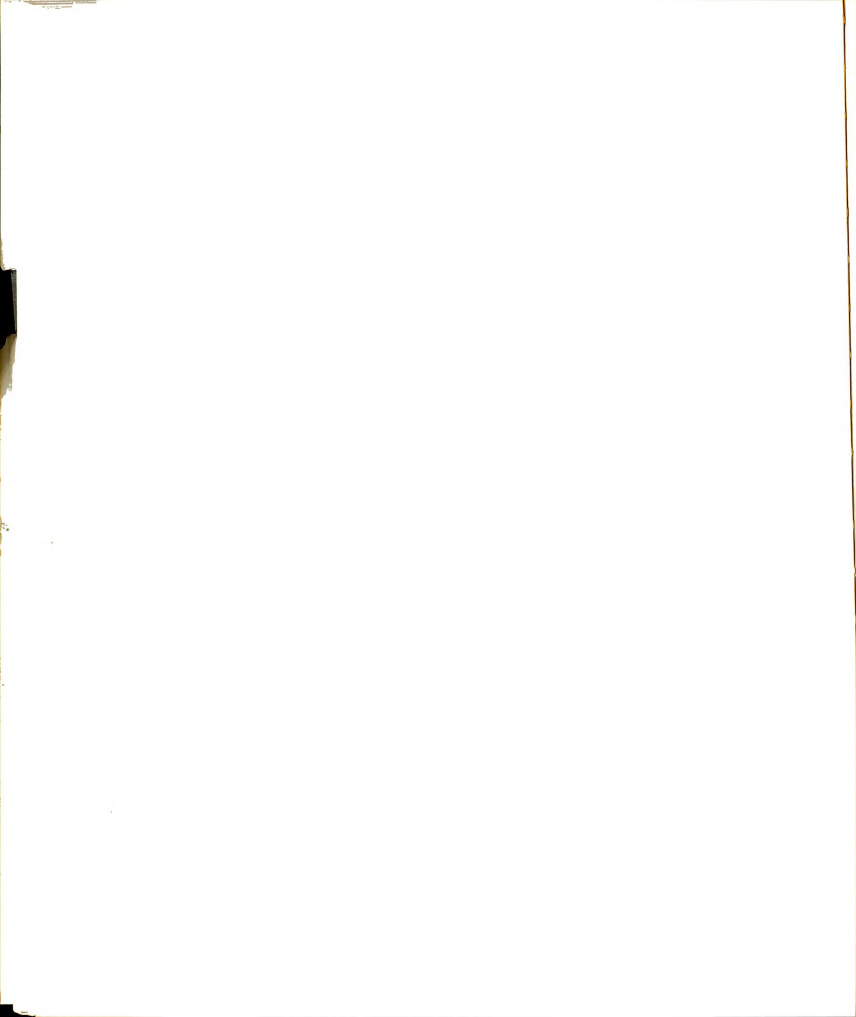
to seek refuge in the inn, and once routed from there, he has no alternative but the woods. We are guided then to believe that he is indeed in desperate straits. His choices have dwindled to one. We are not told, as Crayon would tell us, that Rip had no other choice, that he was desperate--unable to live with his wife and unable to escape her. We rather are shown by narrative description that this is in fact the case.

Once the previous exposition has been established, the dramatic part of the story unfolds, and the narrative voice withdraws a bit. Rip's actions and words, and the use of dialogue and setting, are allowed to communicate directly to the reader. There is little direct narrative commentary and almost no irony in the dramatic scene in the glen and the amphitheater. This is partially Irving's attempt, no doubt, to temporarily interrupt the lightness of tone and create instead a mysterious mood. It also encourages the reader to regard the experience in the mountain seriously. The absence of the narrative voice, is not restricted to this scene only, however, for there is little direct narrative influence in the entire second half of the story. For the most part, the reader is encouraged to draw his own conclusions, though, of course, the early description and action influences the reader's reactions to the drama and ultimately shapes his conclusions.



The lack of direct narrative guidance, however, does not mean that Irving relinquishes control of the reader's reactions. Perhaps the best example of narrative control in the dramatic half of the story is the building of tension. Rather than simply being told that twenty years have passed, the reader is allowed to piece together the evidence along with Rip. When Rip awakes on that sunny morning, we too, at first, are duped and we respond naively to his lament about "that wicked flagon" and to his despair about making excuses to Dame Van Winkle. We share his concern. As the clues unfold, however, the reader suspects what has happened long before Rip does. By the time we are told that Rip "shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward," we are aware of the possible dramatic irony. For we suspect that the trouble and anxiety are not of the nature he expects.

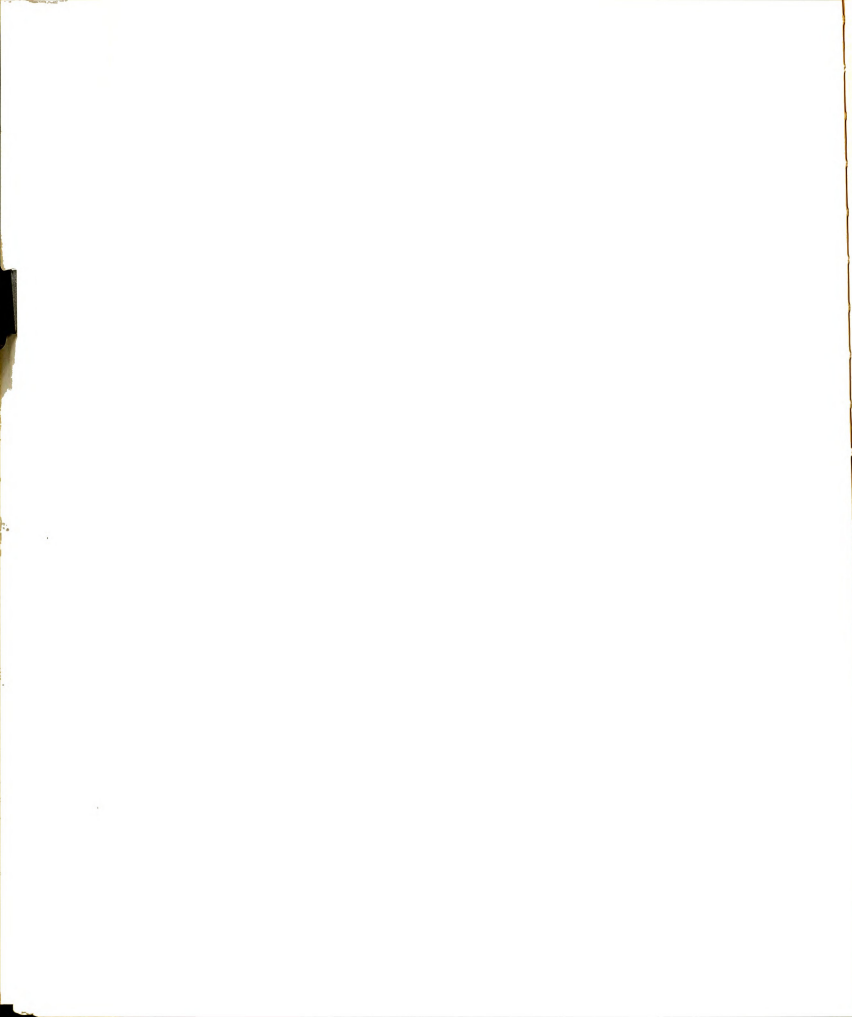
As the gap between what the reader suspects and what Rip assumes widens, the tension increases. By the time Rip is entering the village, and is still blaming "that flagon last night," our expectations and anticipation have shifted. We no longer are interested in simply what has happened, we are also able to watch with both sympathy and amusement as Rip struggles to comprehend what has happened. What Irving has



accomplished here is first to involve us directly in the plot confusing both us and Rip with mysterious events and persons whose significance and meaning are never fully explained. Then, he scatters enough clues to enable even the most obtuse reader to determine what has happened. Rip, however, is kept in the dark. After all he has drunk the liquor, not the reader. Once we know what Rip does not know, we become detached enough from the drama to be amused by Rip's confusion. In effect, what heightens the tension is the reader's anticipation of Rip's eventual perception. This tension is so much more skillfully created than Crayon's feeble attempts to build tension in "The Wife" that it is difficult to believe both selections were written by the same author at roughly the same time.

Further evidence of indirect narrative control in the second half of the story is the use of details rather than summary. The glen, the amphitheater, the personages are described in sufficient detail so we are convinced of their existence. Yet when Rip awakes and searches for the glen, its altered condition is described again in enough detail so that we begin to doubt that the amphitheater ever existed. Crayon might simply have said that Rip searched for the opening but found no trace of it save a waterfall. Instead we are told:

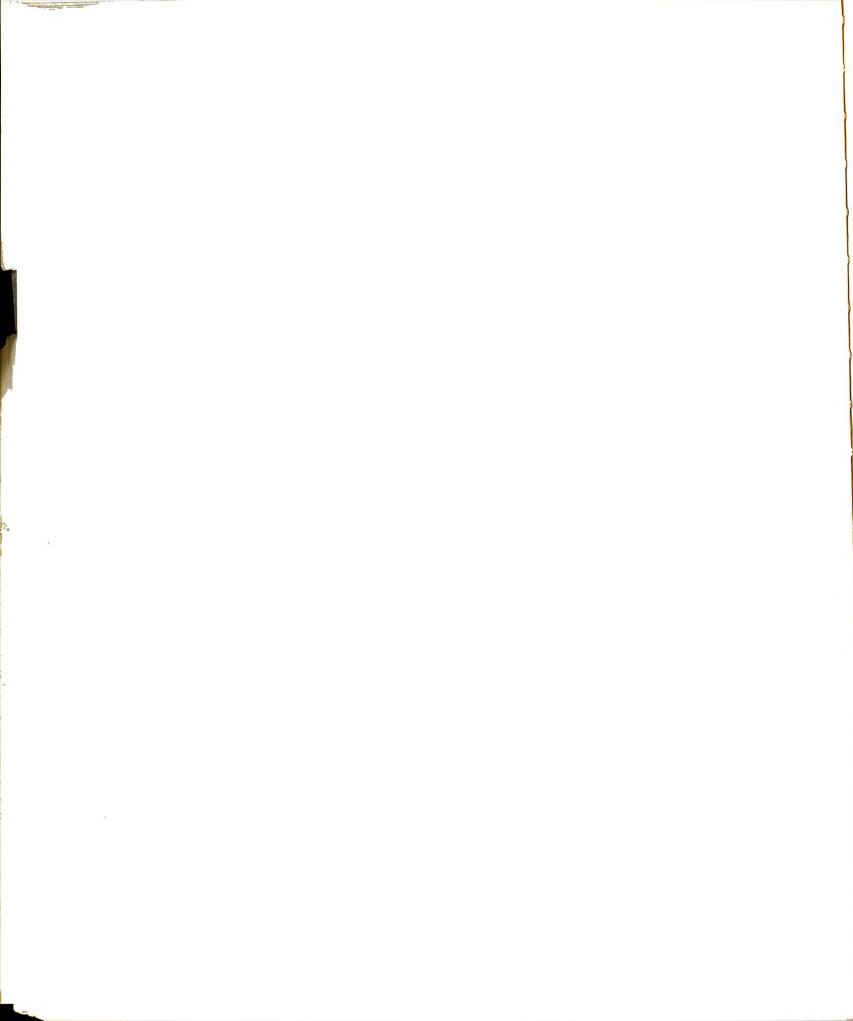
With some difficulty he got down into the glen:
he found the gully up which he and his companion had



ascended the preceding evening; but to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grapevines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path. (p. 56)

Such a detailed description causes both Rip and the reader to doubt the reality of the "previous" night's events and simultaneously convinces us of the passage of time. Similarly detailed descriptions of the alterations in the people and in the village also contribute to the realization that many years have passed. We are convinced that Rip indeed did sleep for twenty years. More details are included in the second half of the story, because more are required. Irving summarizes the information which is easiest for the reader to believe: a good-natured, but irresponsible husband who is plagued by a nagging wife. But the fantastic events, those events most difficult for the reader to believe, are dramatized in sufficient detail to convince us of their reality. Such a balance again demonstrates Irving's critical perception and his skillful control of the narrative voice.

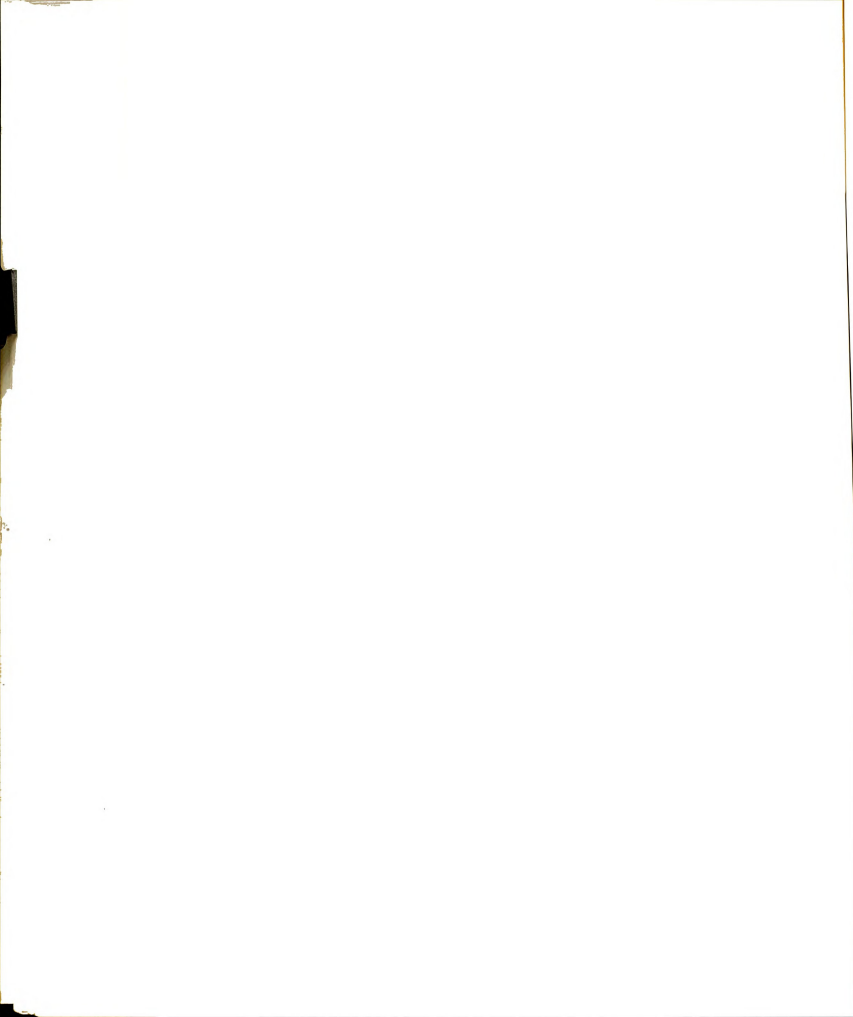
The success of "Rip" depends not only on the narrative voice, however, but also on the effective use of the setting and the skill of characterization, both of which contribute to the theme and conflict.



The opening paragraphs of the story are devoted to carefully establishing a setting and tone. "Rip" takes place in a kind of limbo land which is neither real nor unreal, but rather has much in common with Hawthorne's "neutral territory" where the "Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other."¹⁰ By establishing an appropriate setting, Irving conditions the reader--prepares him--for the introduction of either realistic dreams or dreamlike realism. As in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Dolph Heyliger" Irving takes great pains to prepare the reader for the unusual. The Kaatskill mountains, the neutral ground of "Rip Van Winkle," are described as barometers which magically record the weather. "Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains" (p. 45). Thus Irving appropriately establishes a setting which is subject to change, which to some extent partakes of magic.

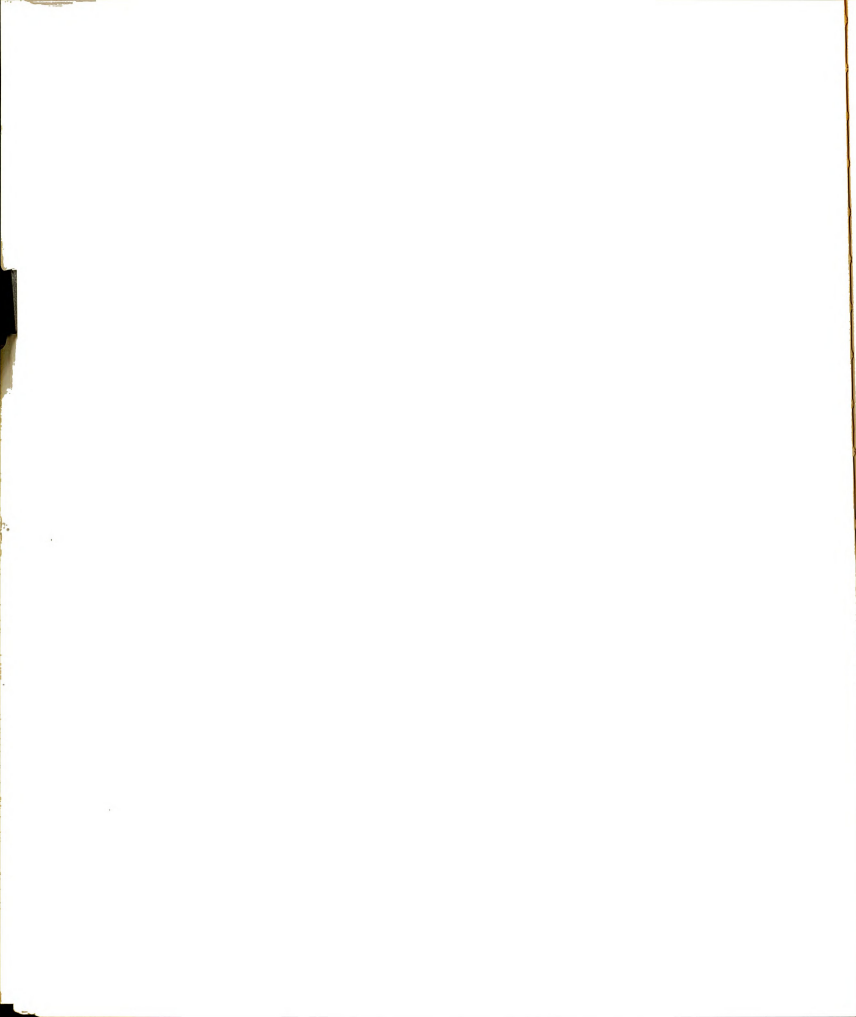
Such a setting, of course, reinforces the action which is to follow. After Irving introduces Dame Van Winkle, and Rip himself, and Rip attempts to escape her tongue, the setting again becomes functional. It is to the woods and mountains that Rip turns when he has no

¹⁰ Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Custom House," The Scarlet Letter (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962), p. 36.



where else to go. "Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and the clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods" (p. 31). It is with this generalization that Irving finishes the background for the specific incident which composes the central drama of the story, that is, Rip's encounter with the men in the mountain.

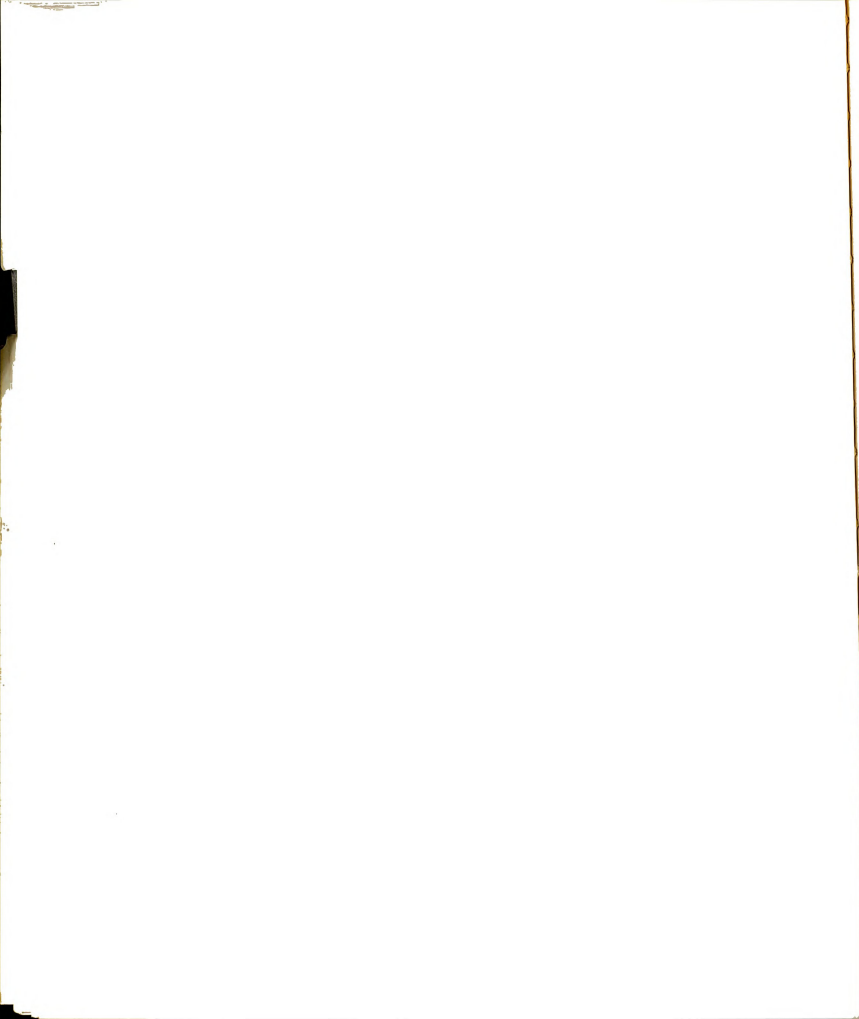
Considerable attention is given to the setting of the initial encounter in the mountains. It occurs "on a fine autumnal day" when Rip climbs high in the mountains and finds himself exhausted "late in the afternoon, on a green knoll covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice" (p. 51). Irving devotes two paragraphs to the surroundings, which includes a glen "scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun" (p. 52). Close attention is again given to the setting when Rip is led to the deep ravine by the "strange figure" with a stout keg on his shoulder. Given the description of the mountains in the opening paragraphs of the story, the reader more easily accepts the appearance of this stranger and, of course, the fact that Wolf growls when the stranger approaches, helps verify the validity of his existence. The reality is further reinforced by the concrete description of the amphitheater:



Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky and the bright evening cloud. (p. 53)

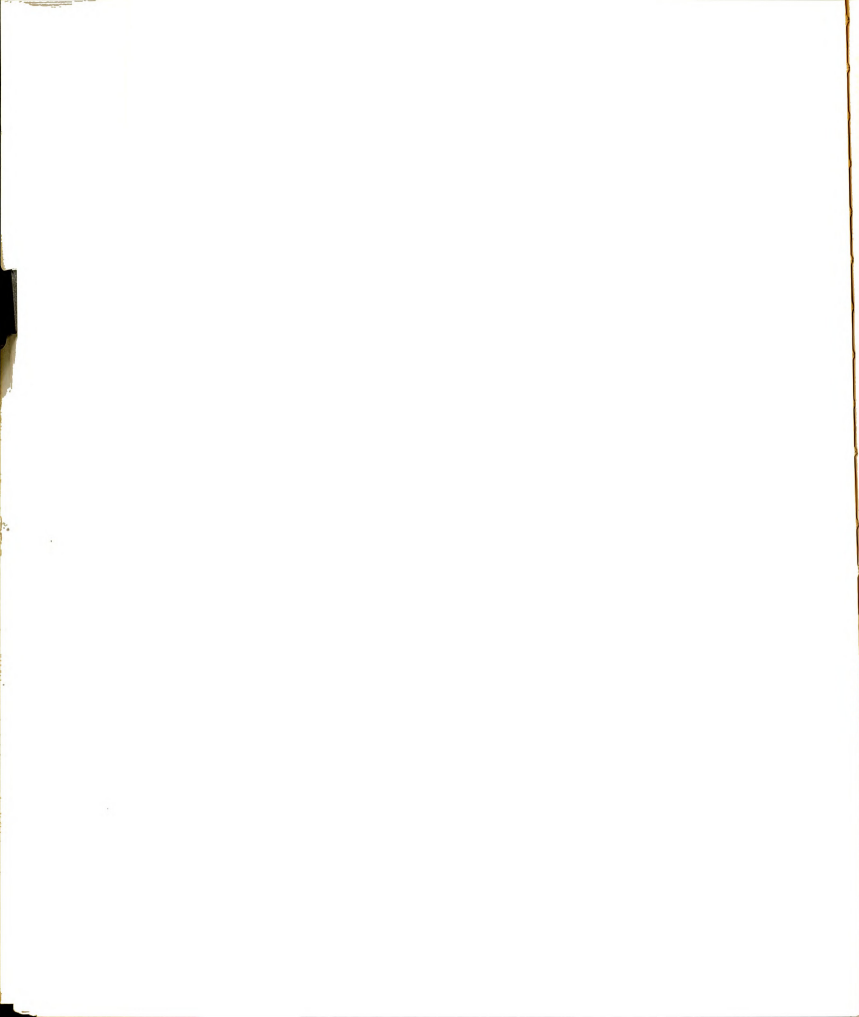
It is by such a realistic description that Irving conditions the reader for what is to follow. We are indeed in Hawthorne's neutral ground. When we are finally introduced to the "company of odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins," we have temporarily suspended our disbelief. The setting and the physical descriptions of the men are convincingly drawn, yet the whole affair is "strange and incomprehensible."

The mysteriousness of the ravine is dispelled when Rip wakes on a "bright sunny morning" and finds himself "on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen." At first the setting provides no clue of anything being amiss. In fact the stark contrast to the previous scene is reassuring. "The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze" (p. 55). It is by contrasts such as this, however, that Irving is able to increase the tension. The lack of an explanation of the meaning of the men and their liquor, and the omission of any explanation as to how Rip came to be once again on the knoll arouses the reader's curiosity. Gradually, both

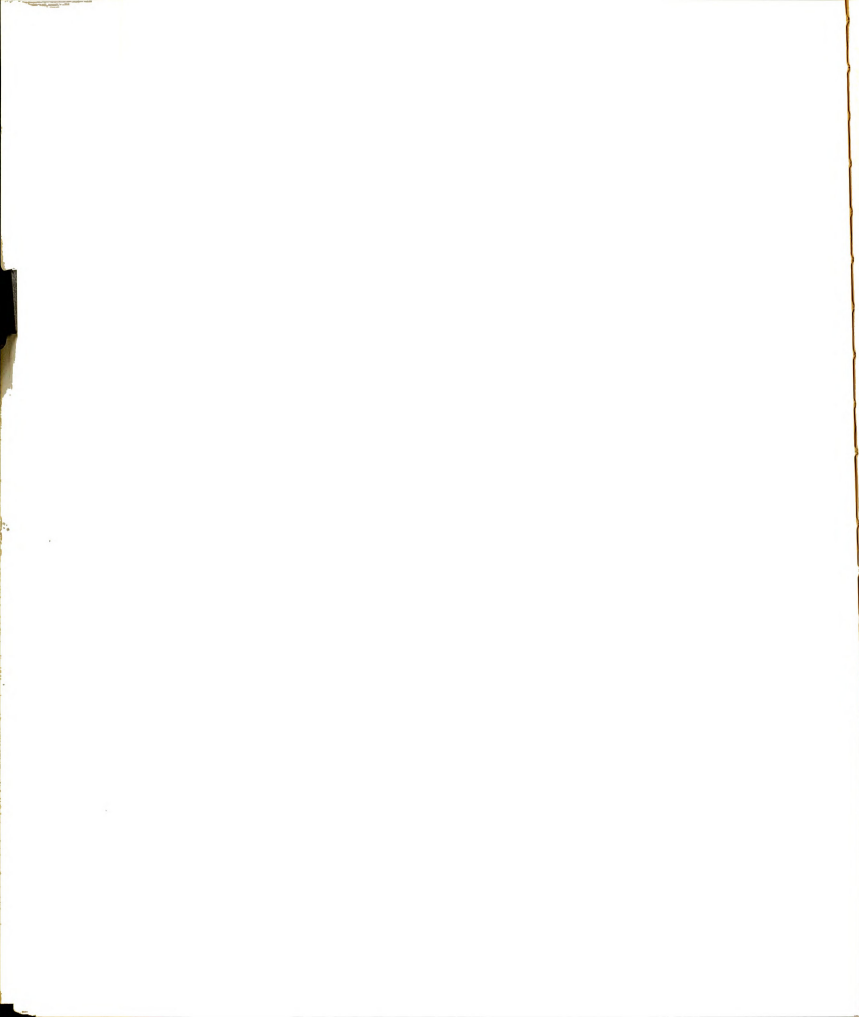


the reader and Rip gather hints that indicate the passage of time. Rip falls asleep one evening and wakes on a sunny morning. Except for the fact that he has inexplicably changed places from a ravine to a knoll, we are not initially suspicious about how much time has passed. But when "in place of the clean well-oiled fowling piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel incrustated with rust, the lock falling off and the stock worm eaten" (p. 55), it is apparent that Irving is using time as a means of building tension.

The events which follow are packed with more and more clues as to the amount of time that has passed. His dog has disappeared. Rip is "stiff in the joints," the glen which he had visited is no longer existent for "to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs." He could find "no traces" of the opening to the amphitheatre. These discoveries about the surroundings add to the now steadily mounting tension. In addition the alteration in the setting, that is, the apparent disappearance of the amphitheater, makes us doubt the reality of the previous evening's activities, and this furthers the tension. What is most immediately convincing is the concrete evidences of the passage of time, for though we may wonder whether those odd men ever actually existed, we are increasingly convinced that a



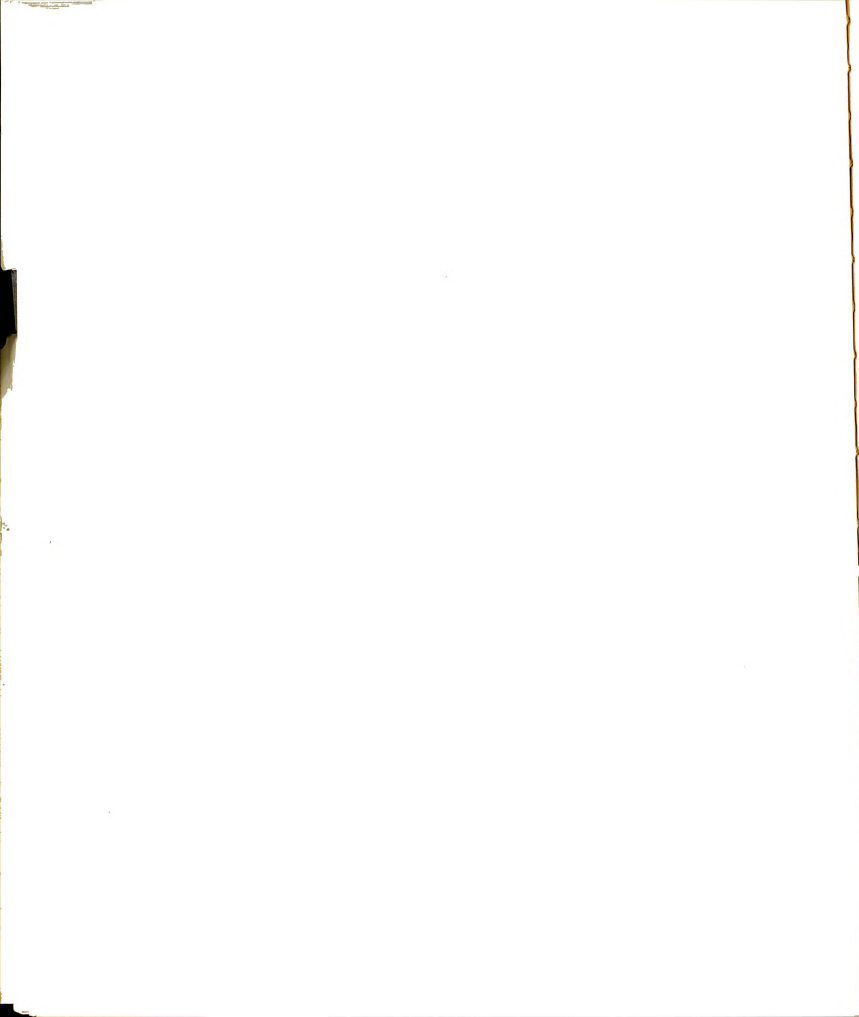
good deal of time has passed. As Rip journeys homeward he notices that people are dressed in a "different fashion from that to which he was accustomed;" he finds "to his astonishment" that "his beard had grown a foot long!" He does not recognize a familiar face and eventually he "began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched" (p. 57). As if to further perplex both Rip and the reader, Rip notes that the surroundings of the village had not basically altered. "There stood the Kaatskill mountains--there ran the silver Hudson at a distance--there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been" (pp. 57-58). Yet contrasted to the apparently unaltered state of these dominant features of the countryside, are the obvious changes in the particulars of the surroundings. The villagers themselves are unfamiliar; Rip's house has "gone to decay," the village inn has disappeared as has "the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore." These contrasting aspects of the setting continue to increase the tension until finally Rip learns what the reader has guessed much earlier: Rip has slept for twenty years. The immediate resolution to this tension, based on time and place, comes when both Rip and the reader are fully aware of the passage of time and the alteration in place. What contributes greatly to our sense of resolution at the end of the story is Rip's



ability to adapt to his altered surroundings; he successfully integrates himself as a member of the village and functions with much more ease and impunity than when he was younger.

The characterization in "Rip Van Winkle" is another significant achievement of the story. Unlike many of the characters in the sketches and tales, the characters in "Rip" are integrated into the action of the story. Rip, of course, is the central character, but his wife, the strangers in the glen, Nicholas Vedder, even Rip's dog, Wolf, have functional contributions to make both to the theme and to the action of the story.

Dame Van Winkle is characterized as a loquacious nagging wife. She is "continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence" (pp. 48-49). Yet Irving does not allow this narrative description of Dame Van Winkle to be the only means of characterizing her. Her actions reinforce the description. When Rip seeks refuge with the village patriarchs at the inn, he is "routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught; nor was that august



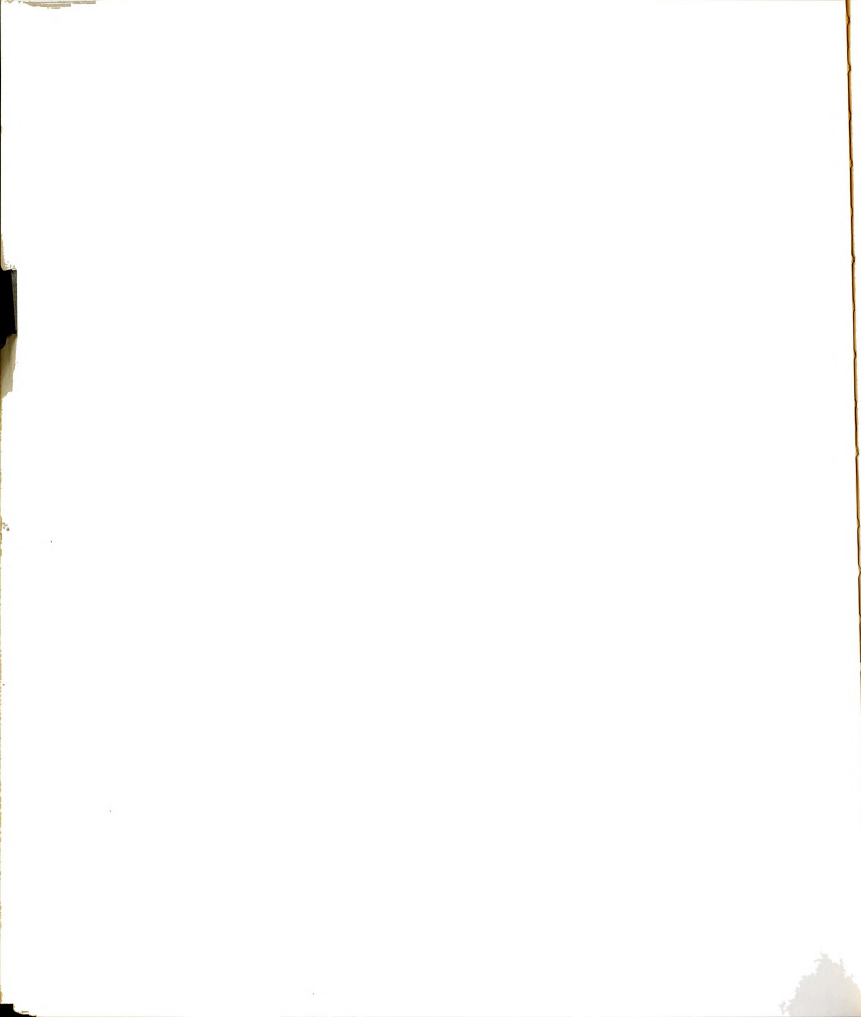
personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness"

(pp. 50-51). And finally, the nature of Dame Van Winkle is also substantiated by the reactions of others to her. Rip was a "great favorite among all the good wives of the village" and when they discussed his family difficulties, they "lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle." Even Wolf, the dog, reacts negatively to the woman.

True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods--but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all betting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail dropped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation. (p. 49)

Thus, even though she is one-dimensional, Dame Van Winkle, in contrast to Mary in "The Wife," is convincingly portrayed and dramatically integrated into the action of the story. She operates to win our sympathy for Rip and to provide Rip with a motive for his journey into the woods.

The characterization of Rip is of central importance to the story's success. He is introduced to us as "a simple good-natured fellow." That Rip is indeed a likeable man is demonstrated by the fact that the other women take his part and by the reaction of the village children who "would shout with joy whenever he approached."

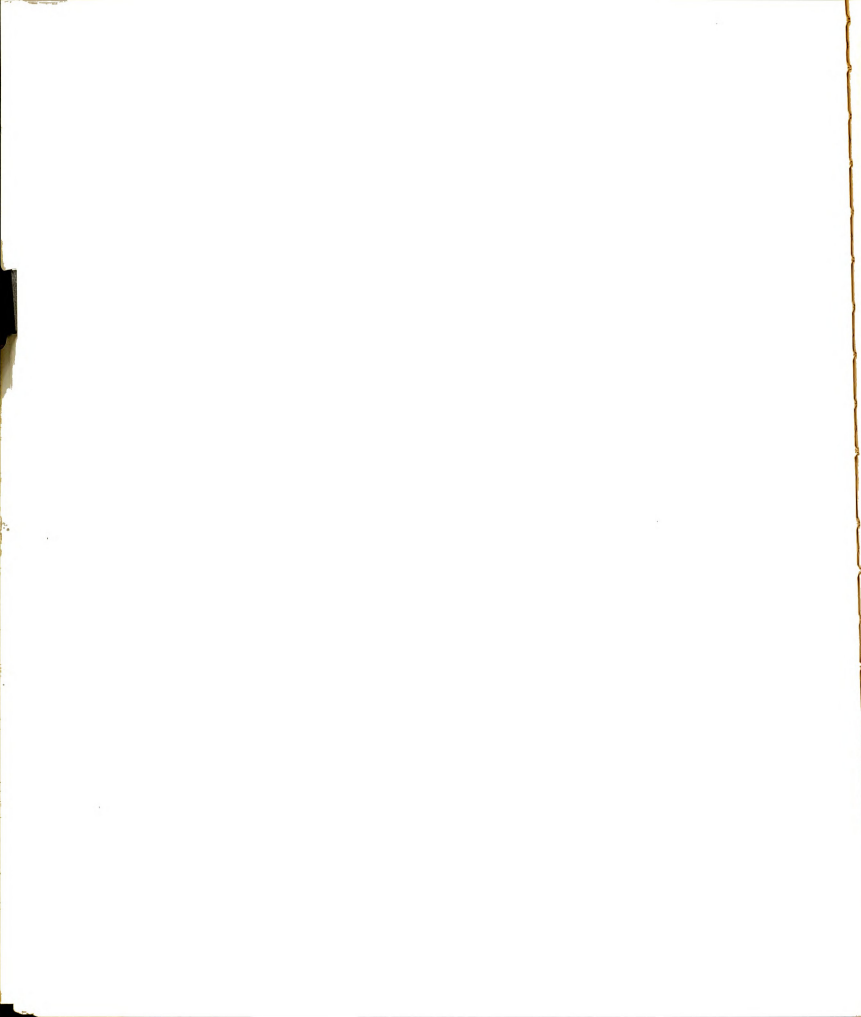


We also learn that he was "a kind neighbor, and an obedient hen-pecked husband." We are told that he has "an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor;" that he was "ready to attend to anybody's business but his own," and that "as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible." Whenever he attempted to work on the farm, "everything about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him." His children "were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody." Perhaps the best summary description of Rip is the following:

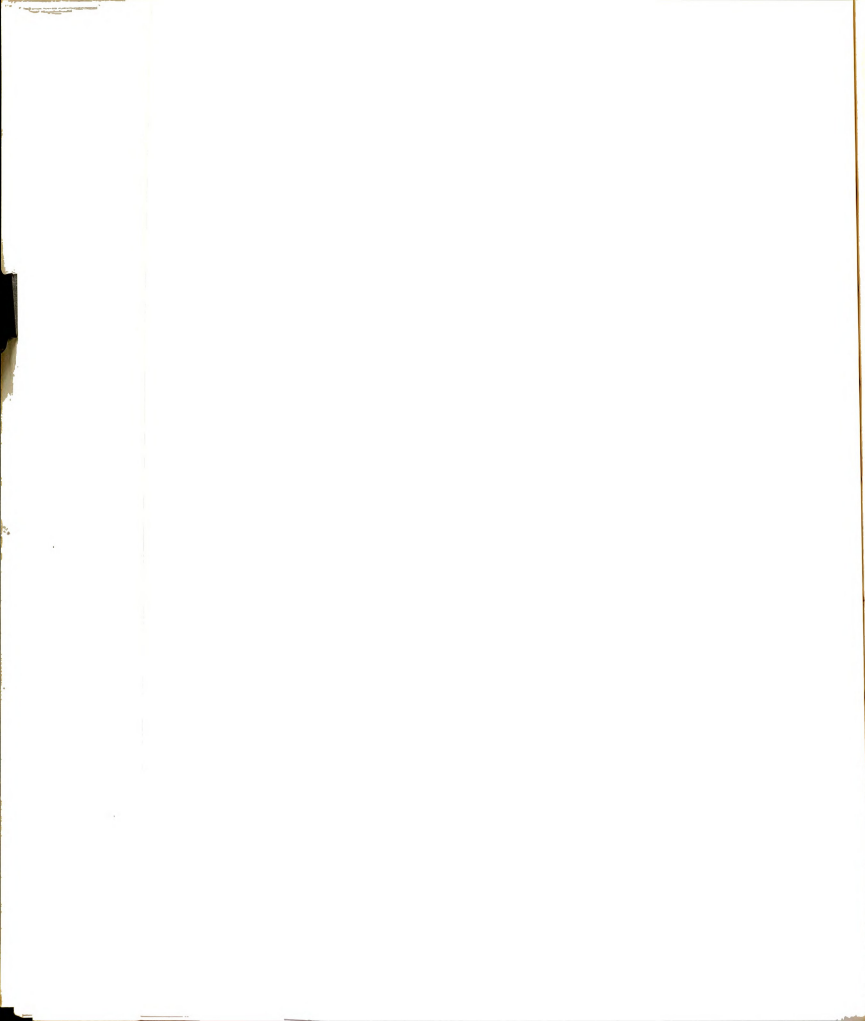
Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with the least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment. (p. 48)

The passage reads almost like a foreshadowing of the events of the story.

A clear understanding of Rip's character and situation are of course, essential to fully grasp the nature of the conflict and theme of the story. Rip is not suited to function as a husband, father, or provider. He is most at home "trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons" or doing odd jobs for neighbors or deliberating with the idle personages of the village." His conflict then is not simply with his wife--that is



only one manifestation of it. His real conflict is with the role he is expected to perform. He is asked to function as a young family man who has accepted his financial responsibility, but he is temperamentally unsuited to that role. He is suited to be either the idle bachelor or the "revered" village patriarch. The resolution of this conflict is not the result of an alteration in Rip's character. He does not come to a perception which causes him to alter either his character or his behavior. Nor is the resolution based on the reader's increasing perception of Rip. Rip neither actively solves his problem nor is he defeated by it. Rather he escapes it. It is true that in the process he also escapes much more. William Hedges maintains that the story, "as several commentators have observed, is concerned with the loss of identity" (p. 140). Yet, Rip's identity is not really lost at all; it is the one element which is preserved in spite of the passage of time. His middle age is lost, complete with its responsibilities of wife, home, and children. These, however, are not essential to Rip's identity. Rip, in fact, has been detached from these all along. His essential qualities of a simple nature, aimlessness, and lack of industry are preserved through the sleep, the crucial difference being that after the sleep he can enjoy the qualities with impunity, and in fact with reward.



It is true, of course, that Rip's dawning comprehension that he has slept for twenty years, causes him, initially, considerable difficulty. In a sense, Rip has two major struggles in the story: the first with his role as husband and father, and the second with his comprehension that he has slept for so long. The second struggle is the one which Irving so closely dramatizes. Rip's initial reaction is confusion and fright. As he approaches the village he realizes that all was not as he expected it to be.

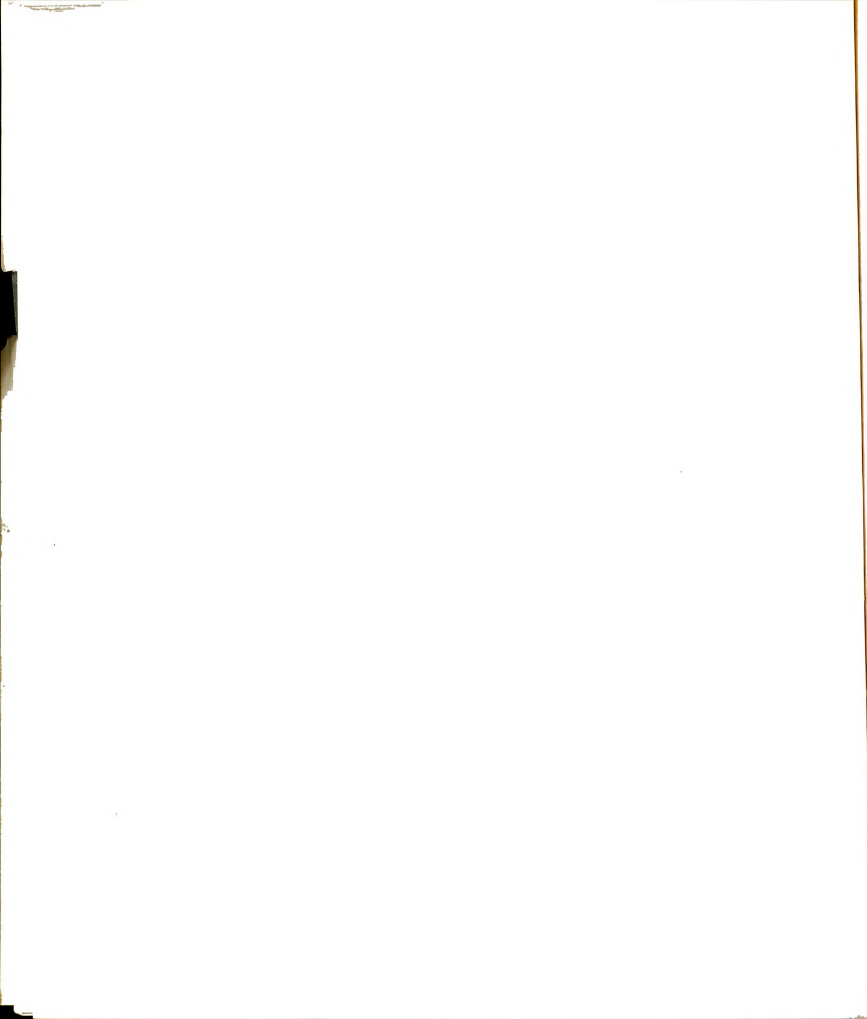
Strange names were over doors--strange faces at windows--everything was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. (p. 57)

He attempts to reassure himself by taking note of the unchanged mountains and river. Yet he was "sorely perplexed" by all that was changed, blaming it on "that flagon last night." His anxiety increases when he enters his house.

It was empty, forlorn and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial fears--he called loudly for his wife and children. (p. 58)

In spite of Rip's temporary panic, however, we should not immediately jump to the conclusion that he has incurred a tragic loss or that his character is significantly altered. He simply is undergoing the stress of adjusting to his new circumstances.

The encounter with the tavern politicians only serves to further his confusion. He is saddened to learn

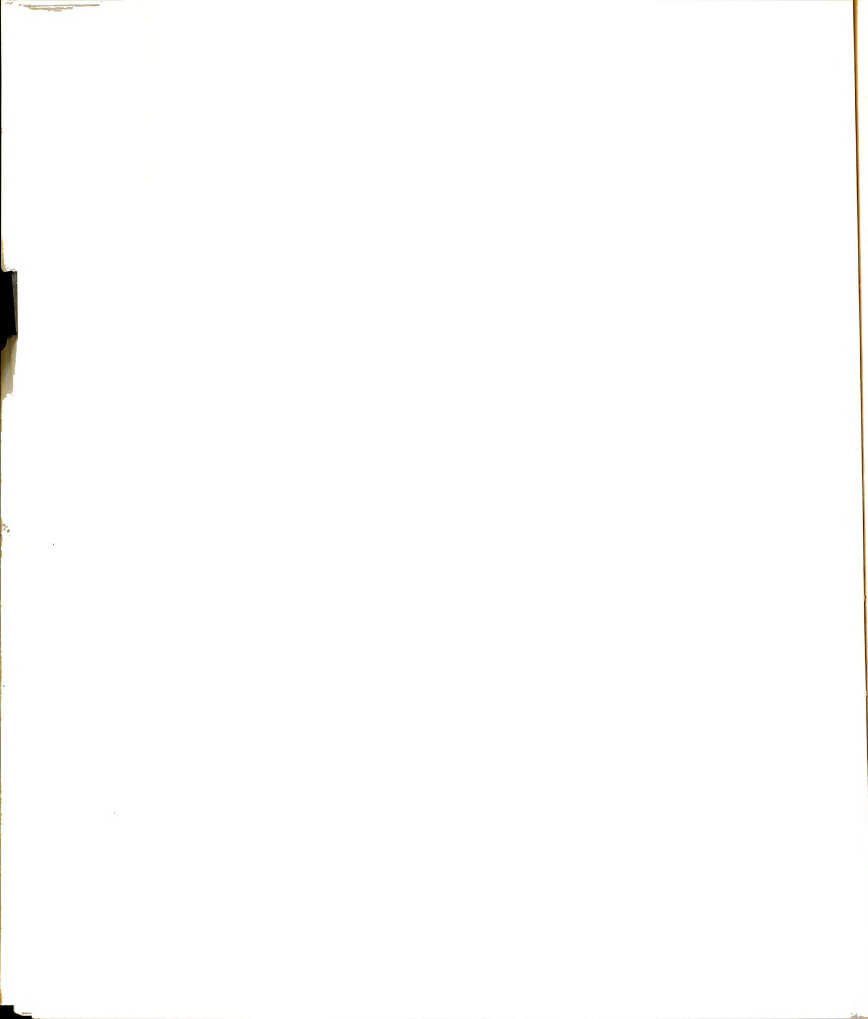


that many of his old friends are gone. His "heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world."

When he sees his son, his bewilderment reaches a climax:

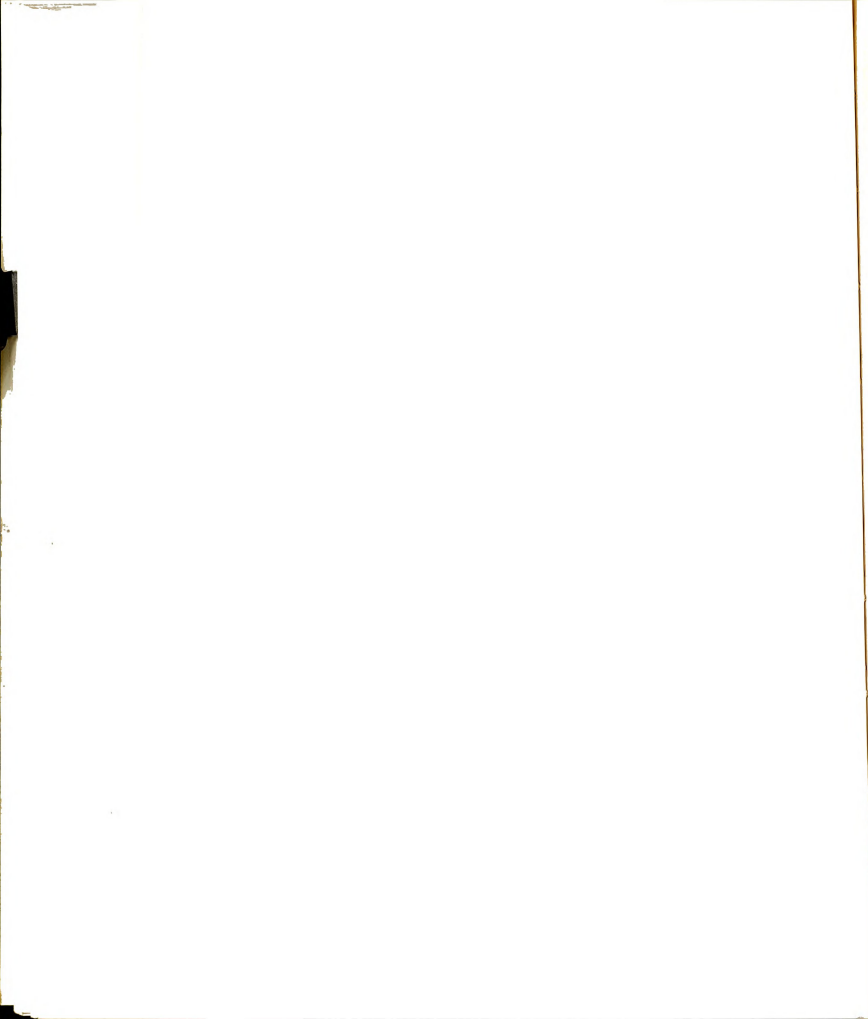
"God knows," exclaimed he, at his wit's end; "I'm not myself--I'm somebody else--that's me yonder--no--that's somebody else got into my shoes--I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and every thing's changed, and I'm changed and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!" (p. 61)

It is understandable that Rip assumes it is he who has changed. Undoubtedly "that flagon" must have contained something that has caused him to imagine all this. But, ironically enough, it is not Rip who has changed, except for some physical alteration; it is the world that has changed. Once Rip realizes that he has slept for twenty years, his second struggle is resolved, but he remembers his earlier struggle, which is not resolved until he is assured that his wife will no longer plague him. Rip asks her whereabouts "in a faltering voice." When he learns of her death, his recovery is immediate and complete. The narrative voice skillfully guides us by juxtaposition of the two contrary states of mind which follow. The commentary that "there was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence" is immediately followed by ironically contrasting behavior: "The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" Now Rip no longer



questions himself or doubts his perceptions; he rather asserts his identity and questions those around him. He has found--not a new self--but a new place for the old self. Perhaps we can say he has come to a perception in that he becomes aware of his potential in these new, altered circumstances.

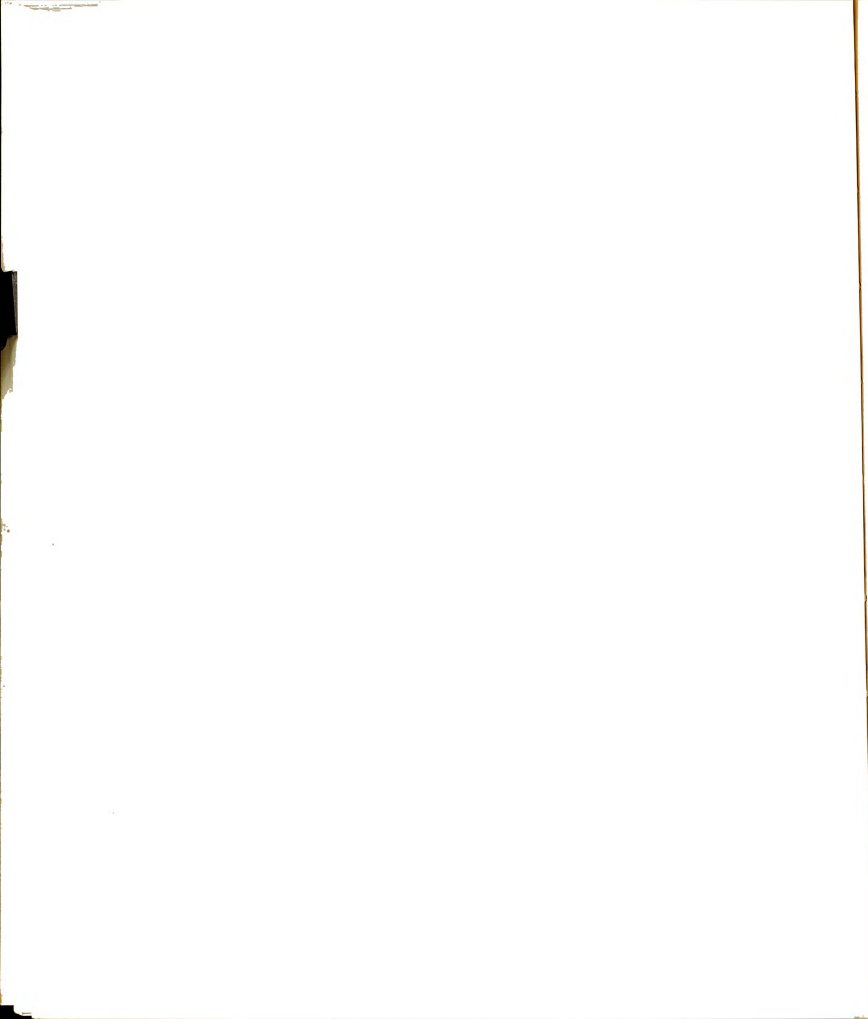
Hedges maintains that "if in the end the story remains comic rather than tragic, it is because Rip is able to parlay his loss into a positive asset to make a success of inadequacy or failure. He acquires a new identity as a result of having a story to tell. Yet perhaps the story is not tragic at all; but is rather a comic story of wish fulfillment. Rip loses none of his identity but all of his opposition. His wish comes true. And in addition, he gains a comfortable home, and is able to function as patriarch and story teller. He lives with his daughter who has a "snug, well-furnished house, and a stout cheery farmer for a husband," and he re-establishes his relationship with his "former cronies." Perhaps, the most convincing evidence of the extent of his adjustment is that he "preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favor." He also was able to resume "his old walks and habits." In short, he was finally able to indulge himself with impunity. And rather than being the object of pity as he once was, he has become the envy of others:



And it is a common wish of all henpecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon. (p. 65)

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of "Rip Van Winkle" lies in the paradoxical nature of the resolution. The final evaluation of the story's outcome depends in part upon the reader's attitude toward work and responsibility. On the one hand, if we view "Rip" from the philosophy that work and responsibility are crucial to life, or the view that says responsibility makes the man, then, Rip's sleep is indeed a tragic loss--a loss of identity. Even if we view the story as a dramatization of the difficulty produced by man's contradictory desires--for ease, on the one hand and for achievement, on the other--we also sense a loss in Rip's sleep. For Rip sacrificed the satisfactions of achievement for the pleasures of leisure and ease. He does indeed, according to this view, go from childhood to childhood never experiencing maturity.

On the other hand, it is possible to view the story as exposing the misleading aspects of those very responsibilities so heavily emphasized by the new nation. As we watch how quickly Rip adjusts to his new circumstances, as we see how much he enjoys this second childhood, our suspicions are, at least temporarily, aroused. Maybe--just maybe--all that work, all those responsibilities--are not so valuable as we would like to think. We

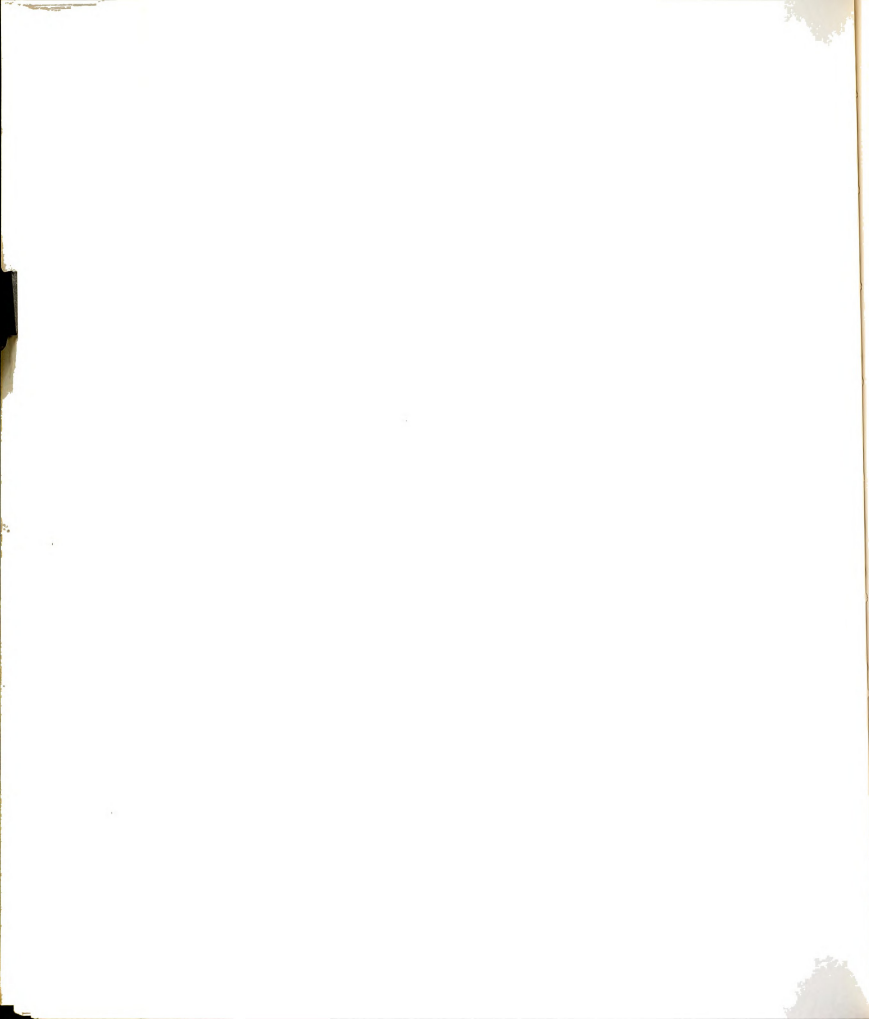


are reminded, as Philip Young points out, "that we do indeed grow old, that time and history never stop" (p. 571). And we are left with unanswered questions. For if we do not assume that Rip has lost his identity, if we do not reassure ourselves that his fate is tragic, or at least pathetic, then what does that say about the value of our own lives, of our own "productive" years of maturity?

Having examined the three selections which succeed as short stories, it is possible to summarize some of the qualities they share--the characteristics which distinguish them from the sketches and the tales.

The detached narrative voice and the use of irony is apparent in all three stories. Irving could not devote adequate attention to his subject matter with the narrator physically present. In addition, in all three stories the tension, produced by a conflict, is resolved in a satisfactory manner. Starckenfaust wins his bride, Ichabod is defeated by Brom Bones, and Rip succeeds in escaping family and financial responsibility. The tension and conflict are efficiently integrated with the other fictional elements so that they reinforce each other producing a unified plot. There is little extraneous information included in any of these stories and the focus of each is skillfully controlled.

Finally, the weakness of characterization, apparent in the tales, is avoided in the stories. Though



the characterization is vividly rendered, none of the stories attributes deeply emotional internal struggles to the central character. Since we are not asked to believe in the psychological depth of any character, we are not disappointed or frustrated by the lack of adequate illustration of that depth.

Essentially, what happens in the short stories, as opposed to the tales, is that Irving more carefully sorts, limits, balances, and controls his material. He subordinates some material, emphasizes other material, and efficiently combines the elements of fiction to produce the most unified impact on the reader.

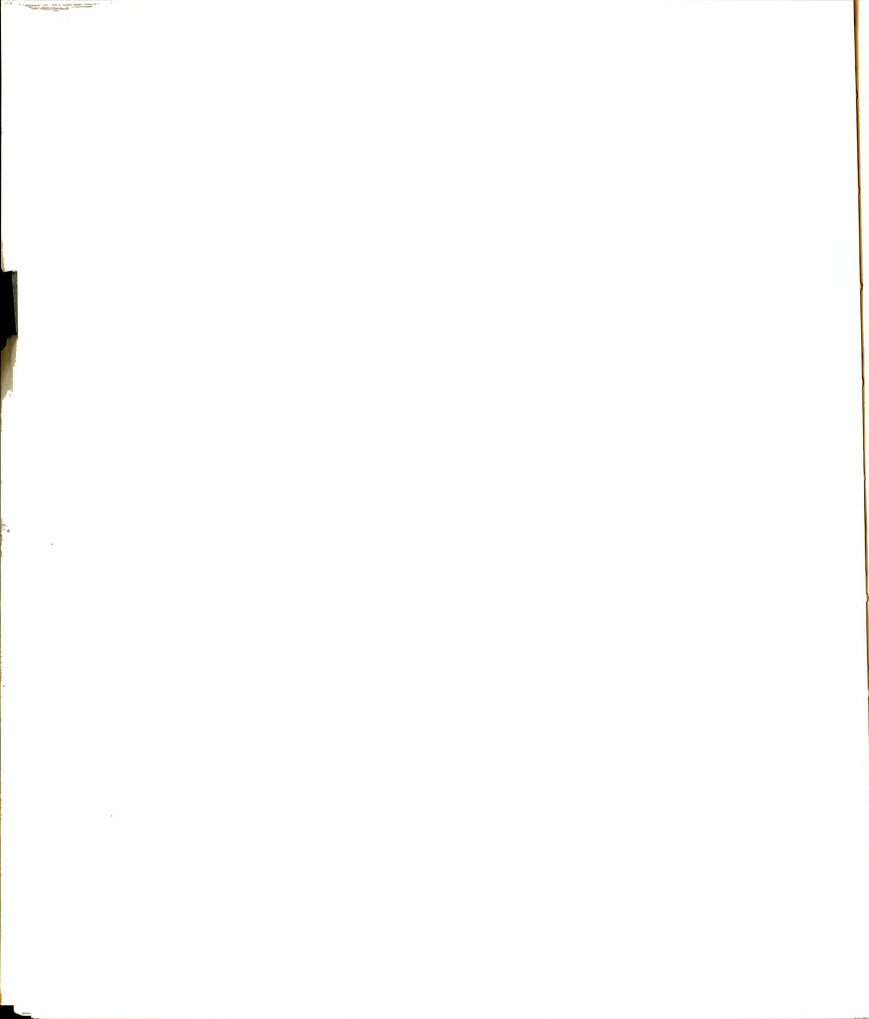
There are, of course, still many unanswered questions about Irving's short stories. Why is it, for instance, that Irving wrote these stories roughly at the same time for the same collection? Why did he never again match the quality of these stories? Was he aware of the structural differences in his sketches, tales, and short stories? What was his critical appraisal of these selections? What, if any, were the personal reasons or traits which prevented him from pursuing the short story mode?

The answers to these questions are largely speculative. Some of the relevant personal factors have already been noted. Irving's personality inclined him to personal observations rather than dramatic renderings. Then too,

he liked using the first person voice, though he had neither the desire nor perhaps the necessary detachment to create an independent fictional persona (in the later James tradition). It is possible that Irving simply could not maintain the detachment necessary to cross over from the personal sketch to a fictional story.

It is also difficult to determine how Irving assessed his own writings. Many of his comments are of the most general kind. It is clear in his notes, journals, and prefaces that he liked to travel, to sketch his surroundings, to paint characters. He liked to amuse his readers, while instilling a moral in his pieces. He was interested in legend, in the traditions of the past, in the supernatural. He regarded plot as a frame on which to stretch his materials and he was consciously and consistently concerned with the style of his writing. But, except for some of his comments about Tales of a Traveller, Irving has little to offer as aesthetic theory. He has little to say about the shaping of his fiction or the structure of his stories.

The fiction which most obviously illustrates Irving's concern with form is included in Tales of a Traveller, the collection which explores the possibilities of the framing story. As we shall see in the next chapter, the structure of these selections is the most complex of Irving's short fiction.



CHAPTER IV

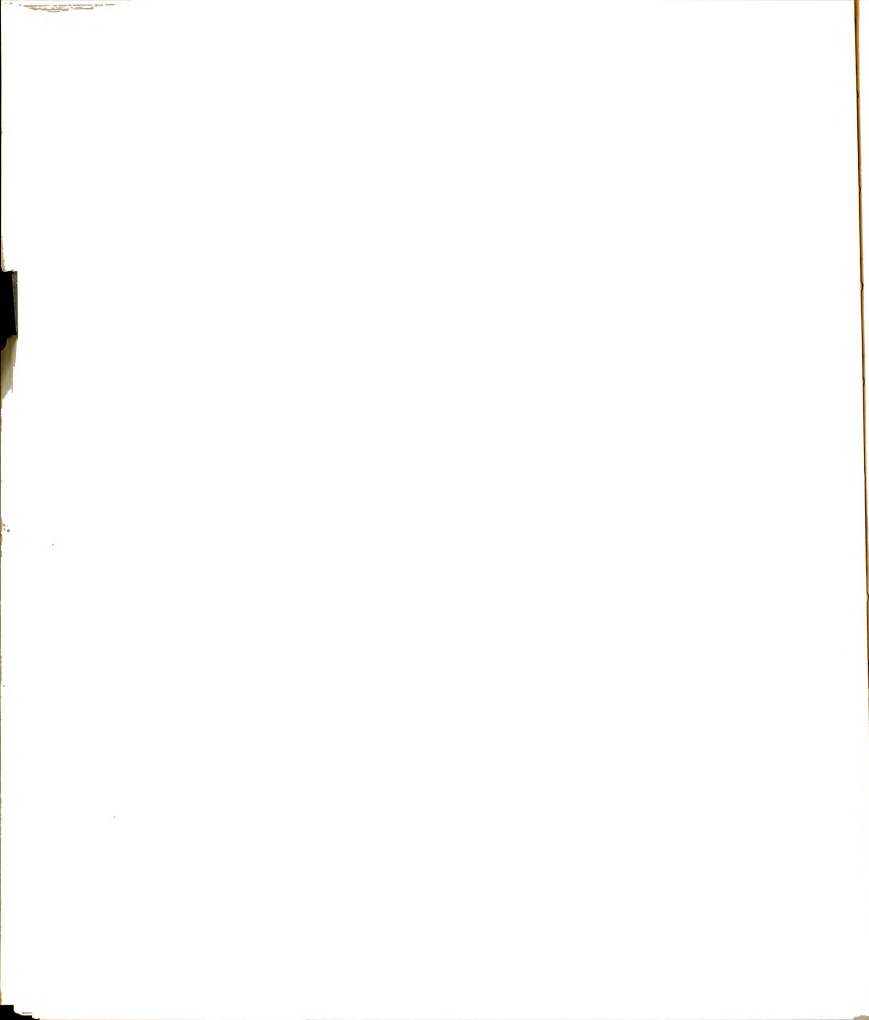
THE FRAMING STORY

The framing story is the most complex form in Irving's short fiction. As was mentioned in the Introduction, the framing story consists of a series of tales each contained within the previous one--in Chinese box fashion. Irving did not invent the form. In fact, as Pochmann points out, the device is as "old as Boccaccio and Chaucer, and older."¹ Irving, however, was one of the first American writers to employ the device.

Contrary to the sketches, tales, and short stories, the framing stories clearly emphasized structure. In these stories, Irving carefully organizes the tales in a pattern which contributes to the plot, the characterization, the mood, and the thematic concerns of the entire piece.

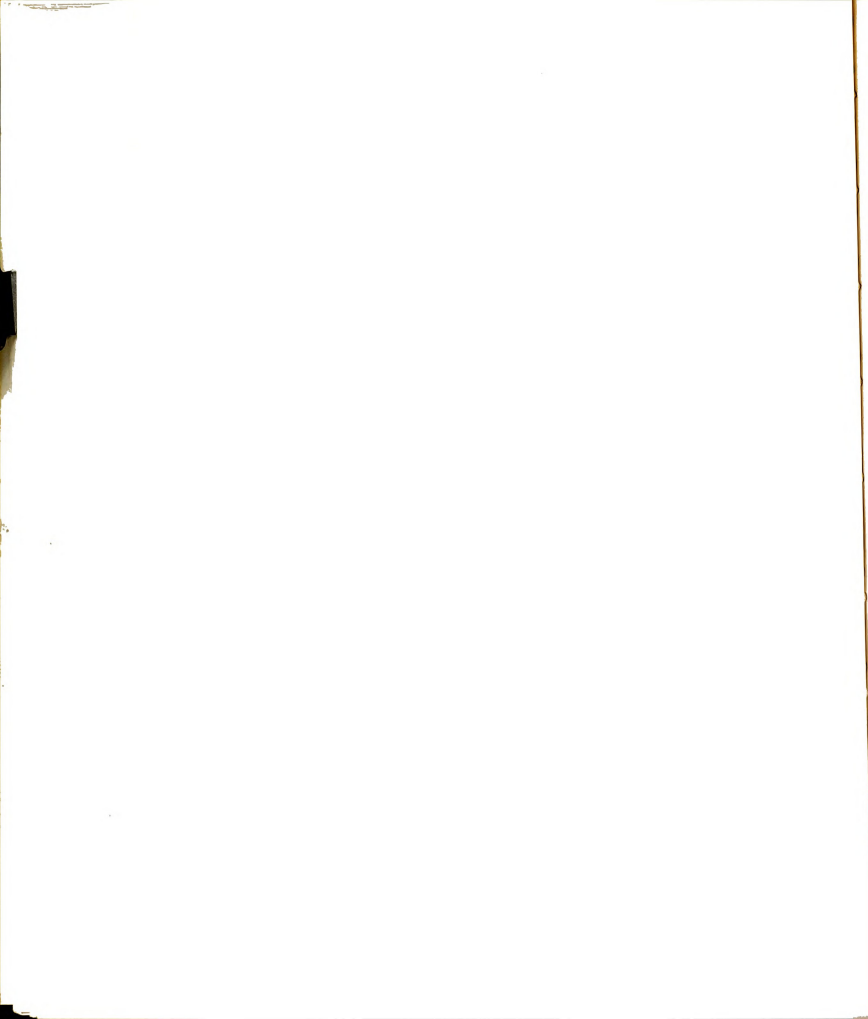
"Dolph Heyliger," one of Irving's most skillfully constructed stories, is one of the earliest and most successful examples of his use of the form. What he

¹Henry A. Pochmann, "Irving's German Tour and Its Influence on His Tales," *PMLA*, 45 (1930), 1170.



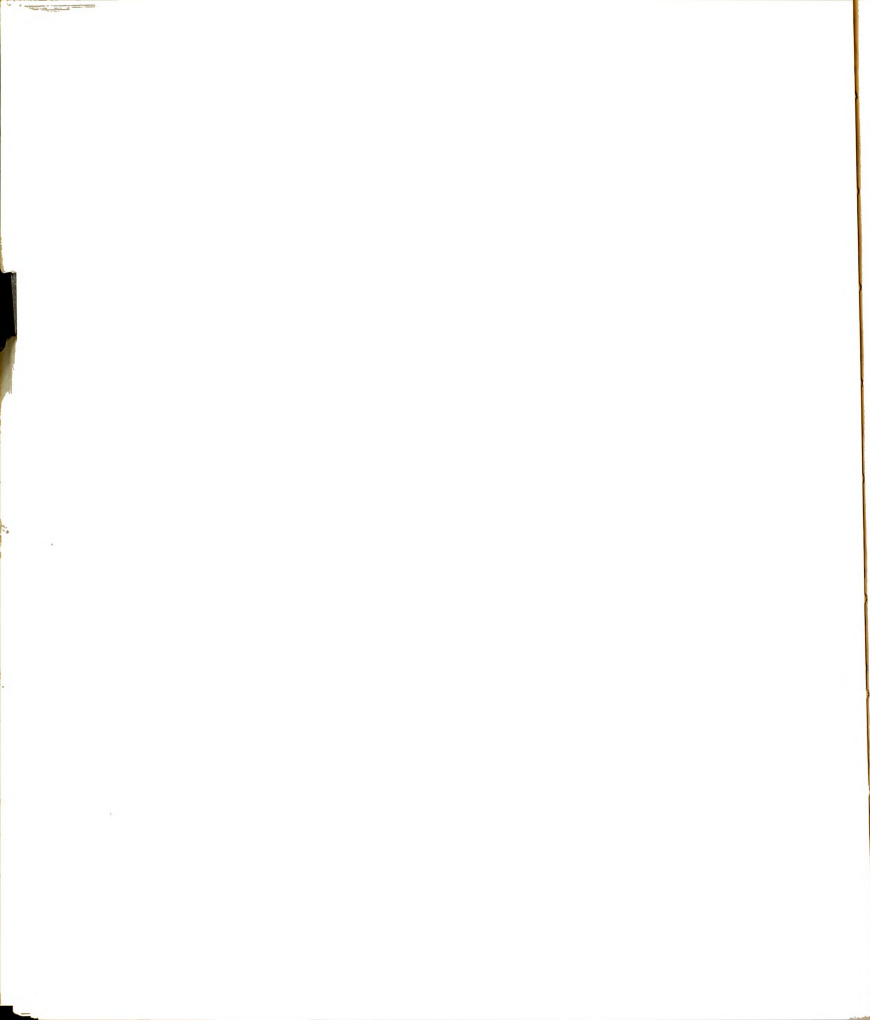
begins here, in Bracebridge Hall, he explores more fully in Tales of a Traveller, but unfortunately, after the unfavorable reaction to the Tales, Irving virtually abandoned the form. The two examples from The Alhambra which conclude this chapter demonstrate Irving's retreat to simple tales roughly cast in a framing structure. And though we might accept such looseness before "Dolph" or Tales of a Traveller, it is disappointing indeed to read these last stories knowing that Irving was capable of so much better.

The three selections of "Dolph Heyliger"--"The Haunted House," "Dolph Heyliger," and "The Storm Ship"--form an integrated series and immediately precede the final selection of Bracebridge Hall. The selection which introduces the series, "The Historian," is narrated by Crayon who explains how he introduced Diedrich Knickerbocker and his works to the group at Bracebridge Hall. "The Haunted House" is then presented as a manuscript found among the papers of Knickerbocker. This selection describes a house in Manhattoes about which there were traditional ghost tales. Knickerbocker, after visiting the houses, engages in conversation with his friend John Josse Vandermoere who offers a tale about the house. "Dolph Heyliger," the third selection in the series, is then narrated by Vandermoere who later narrates "Wolfert Webber" in Tales of a Traveller. "Dolph Heyliger," in



turn, acts as a frame for the innermost tale, "The Storm Ship," which is attributed to Mynheer Selyne, a poet, but is narrated by Antony Vander Heyden. As a unit the series composes the most complex structural organization in Bracebridge Hall, and though "The Haunted House" introduces "Dolph Heyliger" simply as a tale about a haunted house, the story complete with "The Storm Ship" is one of Irving's richest, most skillful and most significant stories.

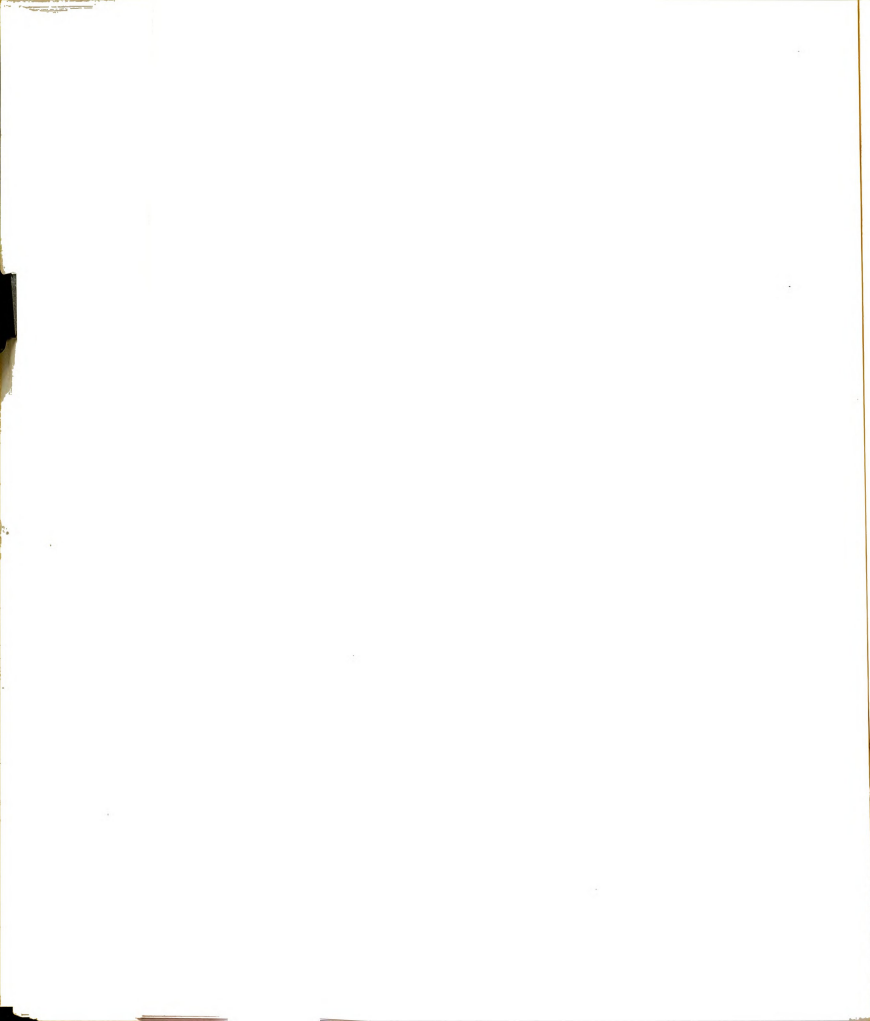
The plot of "Dolph Heyliger" is relatively complex. Dolph, the only son of a poor Dutch widow, was a mischievous child. "Not that the whipster was really vicious; he was only full of fun and frolic, and had that daring, gamesome spirit, which is extolled in a rich man's child, but execrated in a poor man's" (p. 376). In an attempt to provide him with a profession, he is apprenticed to a "famous German doctor" (p. 378), Dr. Karl Lodovick Knipperhausen. Dolph ends up doing the doctor's busy work, but he still retains his "fondness for sport and mischief that had marked his childhood." In fact "he daily grew more and more untractable, and lost favor in the eyes, both of the doctor and the housekeeper" (p. 384). Meanwhile the doctor has bought a farm which is said to be haunted. Dolph, then twenty-one years old, volunteers to "garrison" (p. 392) the house. For three successive nights he is visited by an apparition, "an



elderly man, large and robust, clothed in the old Flemish fashion" (p. 396). The man beckons him to follow to the well outside the house. After the visitor disappears on the third night, Dolph dreams of sailing on a ship.

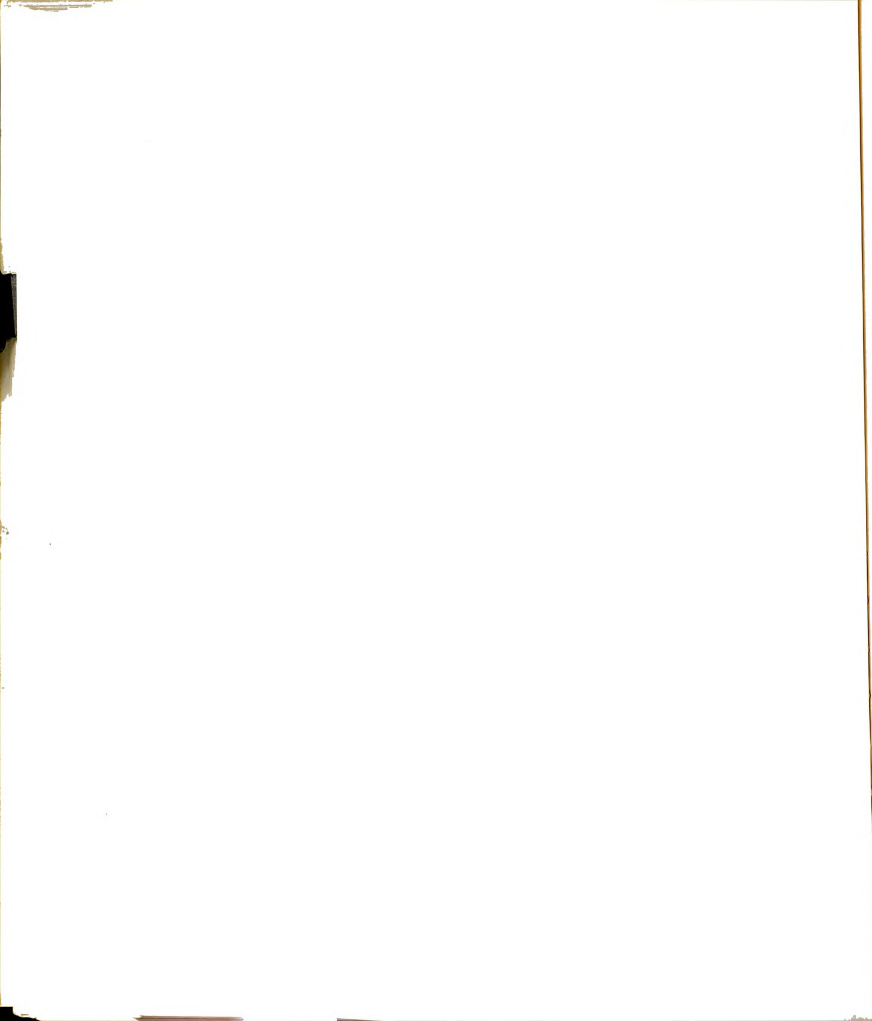
Sometimes he was sailing; sometimes on shore; now amidst storms and tempests, and now wandering quietly in unknown streets. The figure of the old man was strangely mingled up with the incidents of the dream, and the whole distinctly wound up by his finding himself on board of the vessel again, returning home, with a great bag of money! (p. 401)

The following morning he wanders in the fields and finds himself on the banks of the Hudson. About to depart, is the sloop in his dream and its captain is the same captain of his dream who beckoned him aboard. Dolph complies. On the second day of the voyage, Dolph is washed overboard during a storm. He swims ashore and finds himself in the wilderness where all was "savage and trackless" (p. 407). That night, he meets a hunting party whose leader, Antony Vander Heyden, reminds him of the old man who visited him in the haunted house. VanderHeyden was the hero of many stories familiar to Dolph. He joins the party. In listening to stories by Antony (and watching Antony) Dolph "was again repeatedly perplexed by something that reminded him of the phantom of the haunted house; some vague resemblance not to be fixed upon any precise feature or lineament, but pervading the general air of his countenance and figure" (p. 415). Gathered around the fire that night, Antony offers the story of the



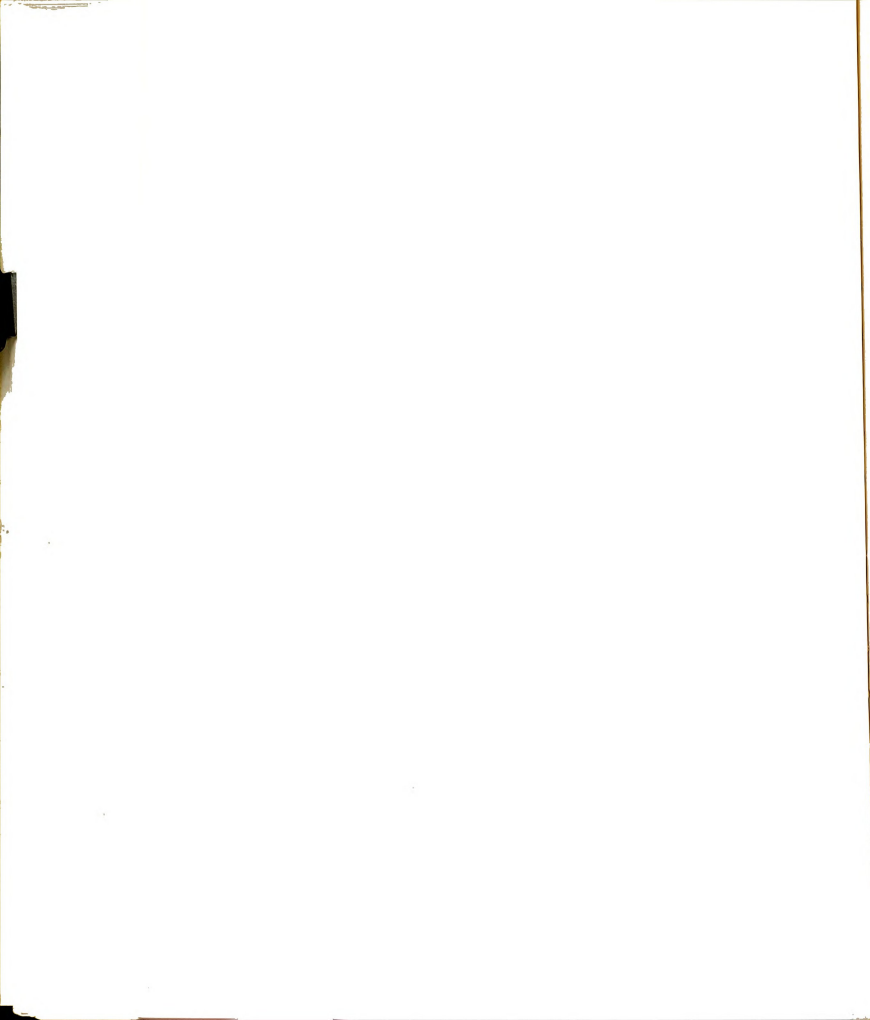
Storm Ship, a tale of a ghost ship which appeared in the bay near Manhattoes. Several theories and explanations are offered about the ship's significance, but no resolution is given. For several days Dolph travels up the Hudson with Vander Heyden. He feels for the first time that he is in surroundings best suited to him. Vander Heyden offers him shelter in Albany. When they arrive they are welcomed by Vander Heyden's daughter with whom Dolph falls in love, though he is painfully aware that he cannot support her. That night in his chamber he sees the portrait of the phantom of the haunted house. Once again he dreams of following the phantom to the well. In the morning the pieces of the puzzle fall into place. He learns that Killian Vander Spiegel is the man in the portrait and the phantom of his dreams. He was rumored to have buried all his money before he died. Dolph recalls that his mother had said that her father was Killian's rightful heir "only that the old man died without leaving any thing to be inherited" (p. 438). Dolph hurries home and after several unsuccessful tries, he finds the fortune at the bottom of the well. The story ends happily with Dolph and Marie Vander Heyden married, his mother taken care of, and his social position secured.

Even such a brief plot summary emphasizes and illuminates the thematic elements of a quest which are



evident in the story. In effect the story deals with a young man who rejects the traditional role of abiding by society's expectations, and in spite of his uncertainty, and fear he sets out on a journey which leads him through a wilderness where he discovers he is in his element. His self-perception grows with his willingness to accept responsibility. He worries about his mother, falls in love with the daughter of his mentor, but realizes that he cannot support her. Once he comes to these perceptions his true identity and the way to success is revealed to him and he gains wealth, happiness, and social position.

As in any good story the fictional elements of "Dolph Heyliger" are so skillfully integrated that it is difficult to isolate them for analysis and discussion. Like the narrator of "Rip Van Winkle," the voice of John Vandermoere, though it is apparent, does not obviously interfere with the central focus of the story. The most evident influences of Vandermoere on the story are the examples of social satire, particularly the comments about the public "concern" toward the poor. (Such comments are later common in Wolfert Webber.) When Dolph's mother is widowed, "it was universally agreed that 'something ought to be done for the widow;' and on the hopes of this 'something' she lived tolerable for some years; in the meantime everybody pitied and spoke well of her, and that



helped along" (p. 375). Later, Dolph returns from his trip up the Hudson and finds that his mother's house has burned. Public concern for her is once again satirized.

She forthwith became again a subject of universal sympathy; every body pitied her more than ever; and if pity could but have been coined into cash--good Lord! how rich she would have been! (p. 441)

Once Dolph becomes wealthy, of course, the public response alters both toward his mother and toward his youthful pranks.

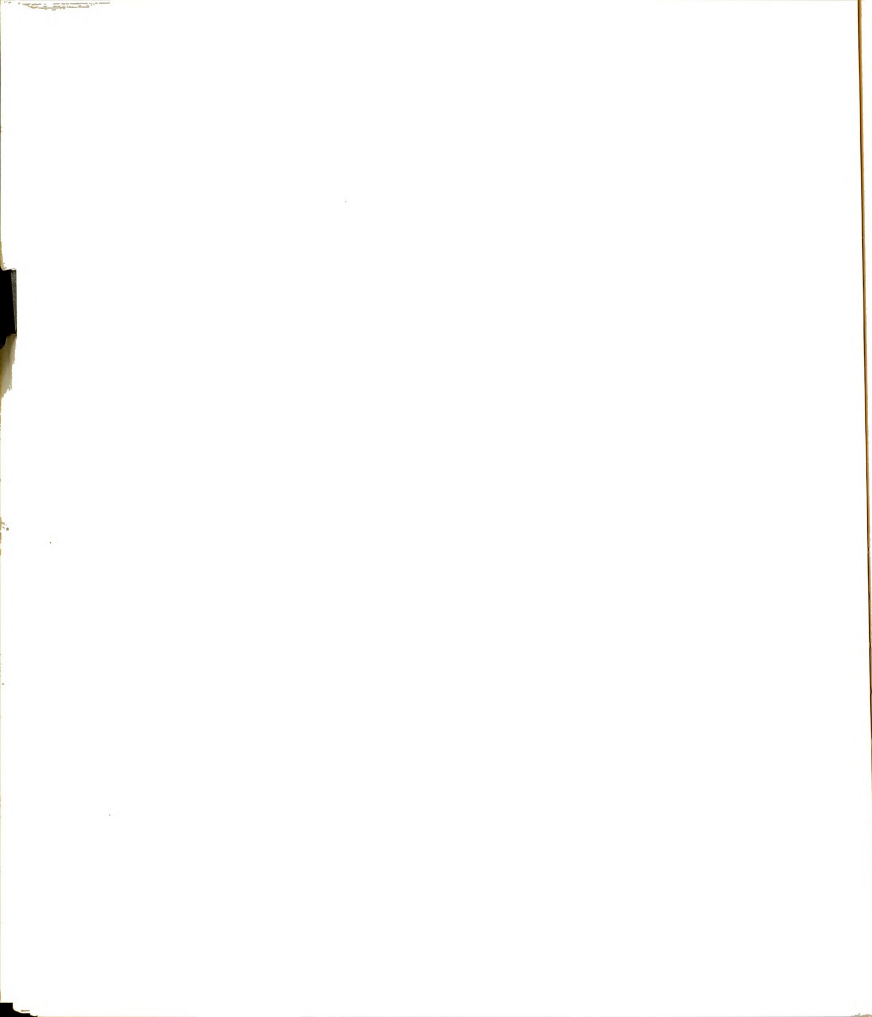
Dolph often related, at his own table, the wicked pranks which had once been the abhorrence of the town; but they were now considered excellent jokes, and the gravest dignitary was fain to hold his sides when listening to them. (pp. 446-47)

Except for these scattered incidences of social satire, however, the narrative voice is not unduly evident. Once or twice some claim about the truth of the story is made.

Were this a mere tale of fancy, here would be a fine opportunity for weaving in strange adventures among these wild mountains, and roving hunters; and, after involving my hero in a variety of perils and difficulties, rescuing him from them all by some miraculous contrivance; but as this is absolutely a true story, I must content myself with simple facts, and keep to probabilities. (p. 427)

The narrator is not physically present in the story as he is in most of the sketches. And though the narrator refers to himself several times, his relationship to the story is detached.

The opening is presented mainly in a third person voice which describes the setting, the widow's poverty, and her attempts to sell some cakes and trinkets. We are



then introduced to Dolph who is described from an omniscient point of view. It is not until the sixth page, when he enters the doctor's house, that we begin to view matters from Dolph's perspective. The activities at the doctor's house, however, are related primarily from an omniscient view. Some incidents such as Claus Hopper's visit to the doctor (p. 389), are dramatized in dialogue without Dolph's even being present. Beginning with the first night he stays at the haunted farm house, however, much of the action is presented from Dolph's viewpoint. We are often privy to his thoughts and participate in his emotions. After hearing the footsteps that first night in the house, Dolph's reaction is described in considerable detail.

Dolph rubbed his eyes, and stared about him; he could see to every part of the dimly-lighted chamber; all was vacant; yet still he heard those mysterious footsteps, solemnly walking about the chamber. They ceased, and all was dead silence. There was something more appalling in this invisible visitation, than there would have been in any thing that addressed itself to the eyesight. It was awfully vague and indefinite. He felt his heart beat against his ribs; a cold sweat broke out upon his forehead; he lay for some time in a state of violent agitation; nothing, however, occurred to increase his alarm. (p. 395)

When he jumps aboard the vessel headed up the Hudson we again are given a detailed description of the confusion of his mind.

Dolph's thoughts and feelings were all in tumult and confusion. He had been strongly worked upon by the events which had recently befallen him, and could not but think there was some connection between his

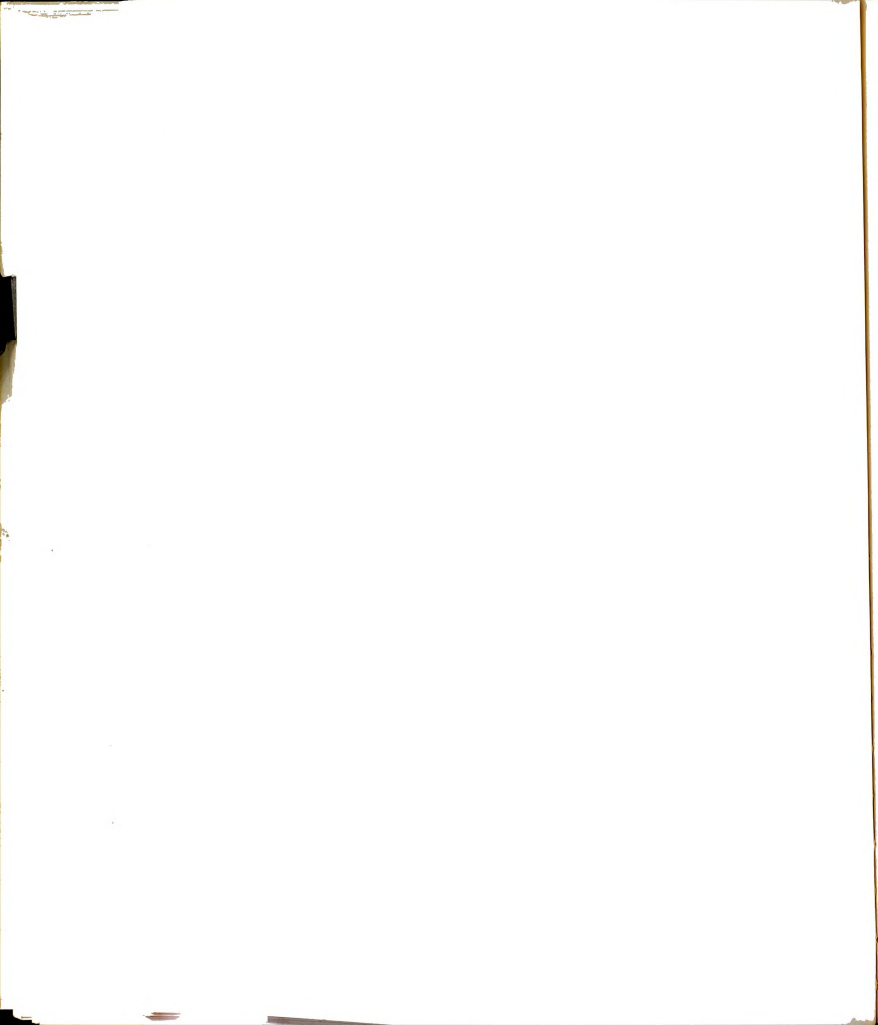
present situation and his last night's dream. He felt as if under supernatural influence; and tried to assure himself with an old and favorite maxim of his, that 'one way or other, all would turn out for the best.' (p. 403)

Allowing the reader to overhear Dolph's thoughts in these scenes contributes dramatic realism. We are more directly involved in the action; there is no narrative presence separating us from the action.

At his most perceptive moment, musing in his bed at Antony's house, Dolph actually states his thoughts aloud.

"This is a fine conclusion, truly, of my voyage," said he, as he almost buried himself in a sumptuous featherbed, and drew the fresh white sheets up to his chin. "Here am I, instead of finding a bag of money to carry home, launched in a strange place, with scarcely a stiver in my pocket; and, what is worse, have jumped ashore up to my very ears in love into the bargain. "However," added he, after some pause stretching himself, and turning himself in bed, "I'm in good quarters for the present, at least; so I'll e'en enjoy the present moment, and let the next take care of itself; I dare say all will work out, 'somehow or other,' for the best." (p. 436)

The detailed narrative focus which is illustrated in this scene is missing in "The Student of Salamanca" and "Annette Delarbre." In the latter tales we are seldom allowed to share the thoughts and emotions of the central characters. Instead their intense experiences are summarized for us. Not only does such summarizing weaken the characterization, but it also removes possible sources of tension in the tale. One effective method of building tension is to dramatize the most significant

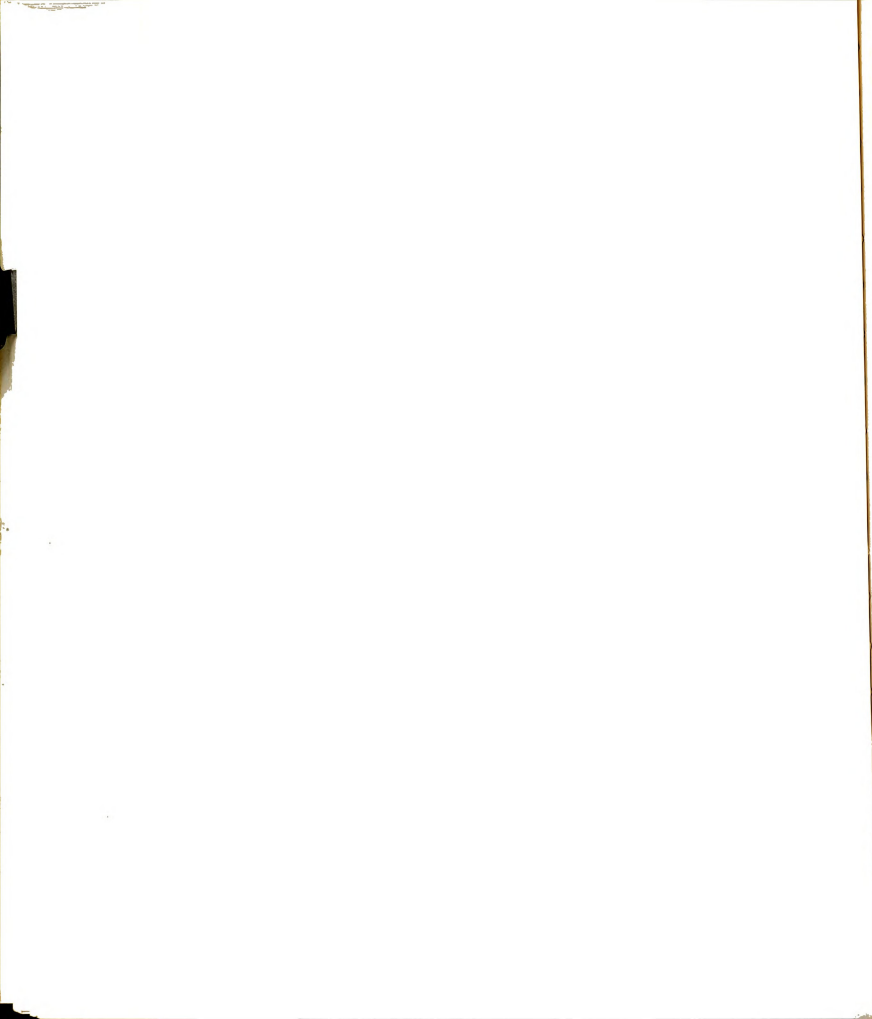


scenes in a piece. The first half of "Rip Van Winkle," for example, contains a good deal of summarizing, but the important parts of the story are dramatized in detail.

One of the characteristics, then, that distinguishes Irving's weaker tales from his successful stories is the author's choice of what is summarized and what is dramatized. In "Dolph" Irving focuses on the scenes which are most important to the characterization, theme, and plot. Dolph's experiences with the phantom, his embarkment up the Hudson, the storm which washes him overboard, the description of the wilderness, his meeting with Vander Heyden, Vander Heyden's house in Albany, and the discovery of Dolph's identity and the retrieval of the treasure are described in detail. His mother's poor condition, his experiences at the doctor's, the first day of the voyage, the days voyaging with Vander Heyden, his courting of Marie, his return voyage, his welcome home, and his later social success all are filled with detail but are nevertheless summarized. This alternation of summarizing and dramatic focus contributes realism and tension to the story.

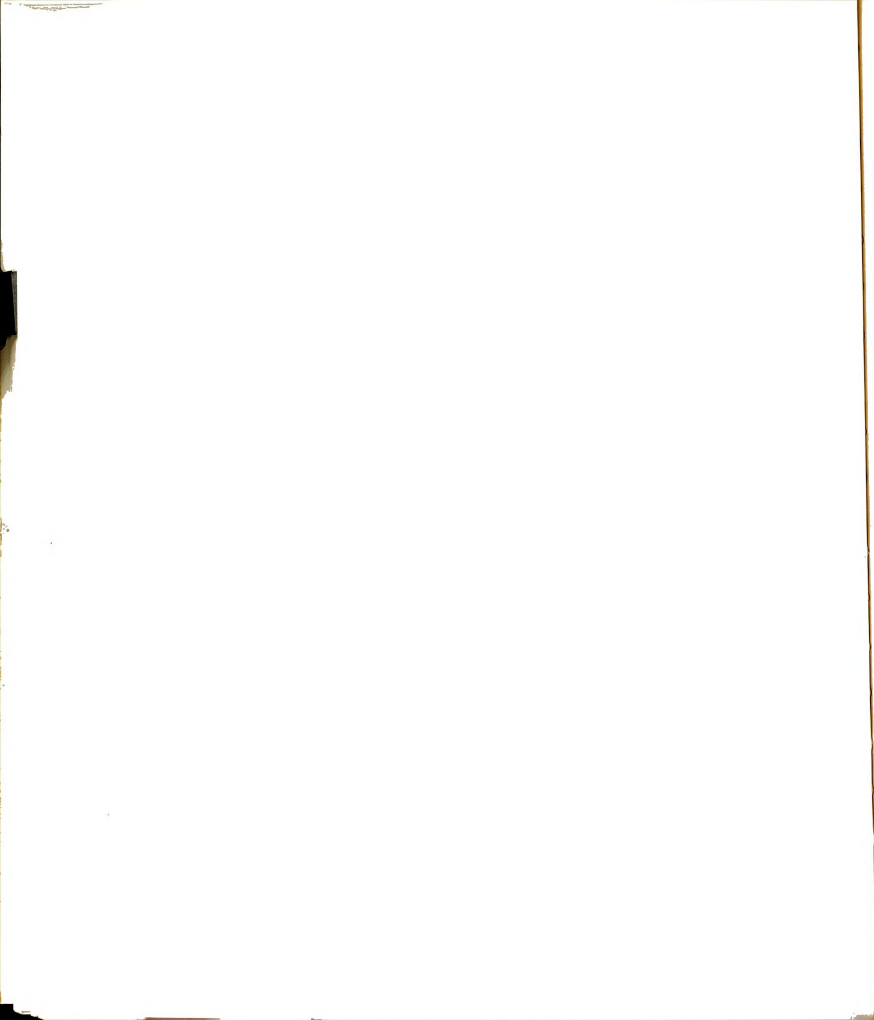
The initial visit of the phantom to Dolph's room is narrated as Dolph views it and is full of dramatic tension.

By-and-by he thought he heard a sound as of some one walking below stairs. He listened, and distinctly heard a step on the great staircase. It approached solemnly and slowly, tramp--tramp--tramp! It was



evidently the tread of some heavy personage; and yet how could he have got into the house without making a noise? He had examined all the fastenings, and was certain that every entrance was secure. Still the steps advanced, tramp--tramp--tramp! It was evident that the person approaching could not be a robber, the step was too loud and deliberate; a robber would either be stealthy or precipitate. And now the footsteps had ascended the staircase; they were slowly advancing along the passage, resounding through the silent and empty apartments. The very cricket had ceased its melancholy note, and nothing interrupted their awful distinctness. The door, which had been locked on the inside, slowly swung open, as if self-moved. (pp. 394-95)

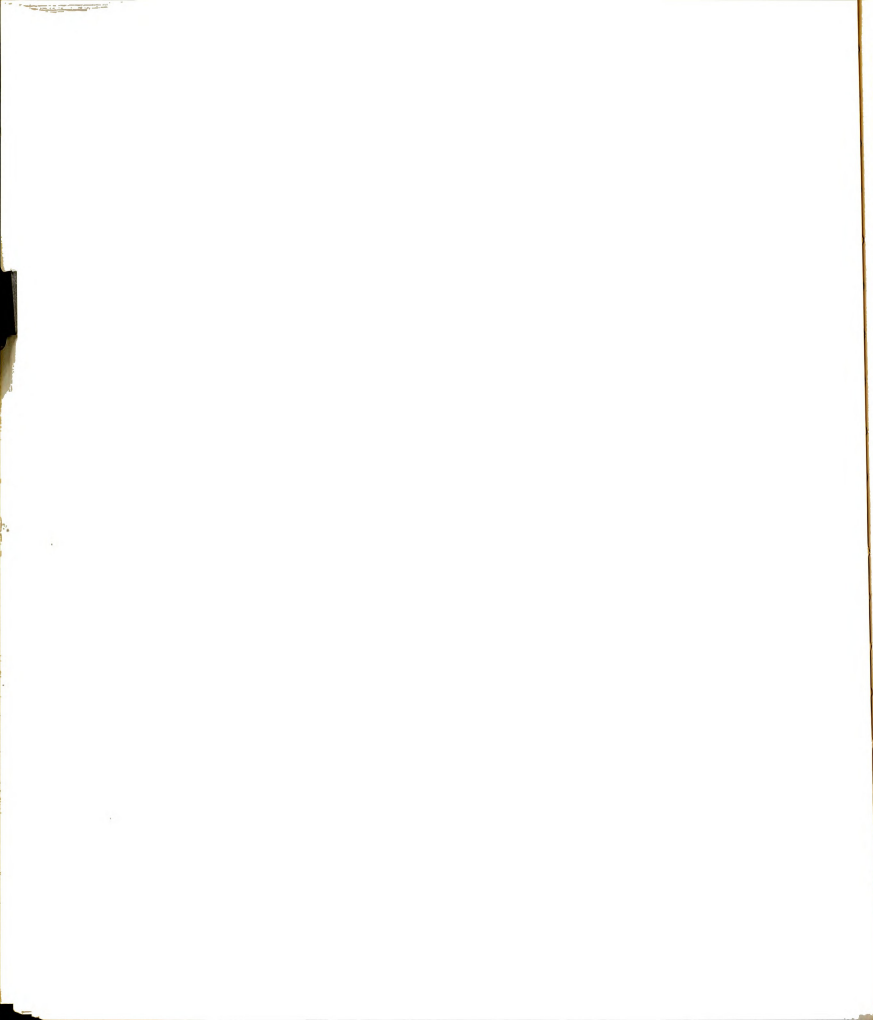
The successive visits are also tension-filled: each time the phantom participates in more unexplained activities which intensify Dolph's fear and curiosity. Both the use of supernatural events and the journey up the Hudson provide tension. Most immediately we are eager to learn what will happen. Will the phantom appear again; will Dolph get on the boat; will he find his way out of the wilderness; what will he find in Albany; will he be reunited with his mother; will he find the gold in the well? The repetitious appearance of the phantom and the repetition of the dreams helps reinforce this plot tension. There is also, however, a tension which is built on unexplained meanings. Who is the phantom; why does he point to the well; why does Dolph dream of the ship; what is the reason for his journey; why does Antony remind him of the phantom; what is the meaning of the storm ship; who is the man in the picture? These last questions, of course, not only keep us interested



in the story's outcome, but encourage us to consider the meaning of the story. They add depth to what otherwise might be simply another plot story. Stories dominated by plot, such as the early ghost tales in Part I of Tales of a Traveller, do contain tension but it is a tension based solely on plot. In these tales, we wonder what is going to happen, but we are not encouraged to seek the meaning of the events. Though plot is an important element in "Dolph Heyliger," the story is not merely a plot story. Rather the thematic concerns and the characterization are perhaps the most important aspects.

Before examining the theme and characterization, however, it will be useful to first note Irving's use of the supernatural. The supernatural not only adds to the tension of plot and theme, but it also is functionally integrated with the setting and characterization. The setting is most emphasized during the events which occur at the two houses and in the wilderness. The detailed description of the interior of the haunted house helps reinforce the realistic portrayal of the supernatural events which take place there. When Dolph first enters the haunted house, we are given a lengthy description of the interior.

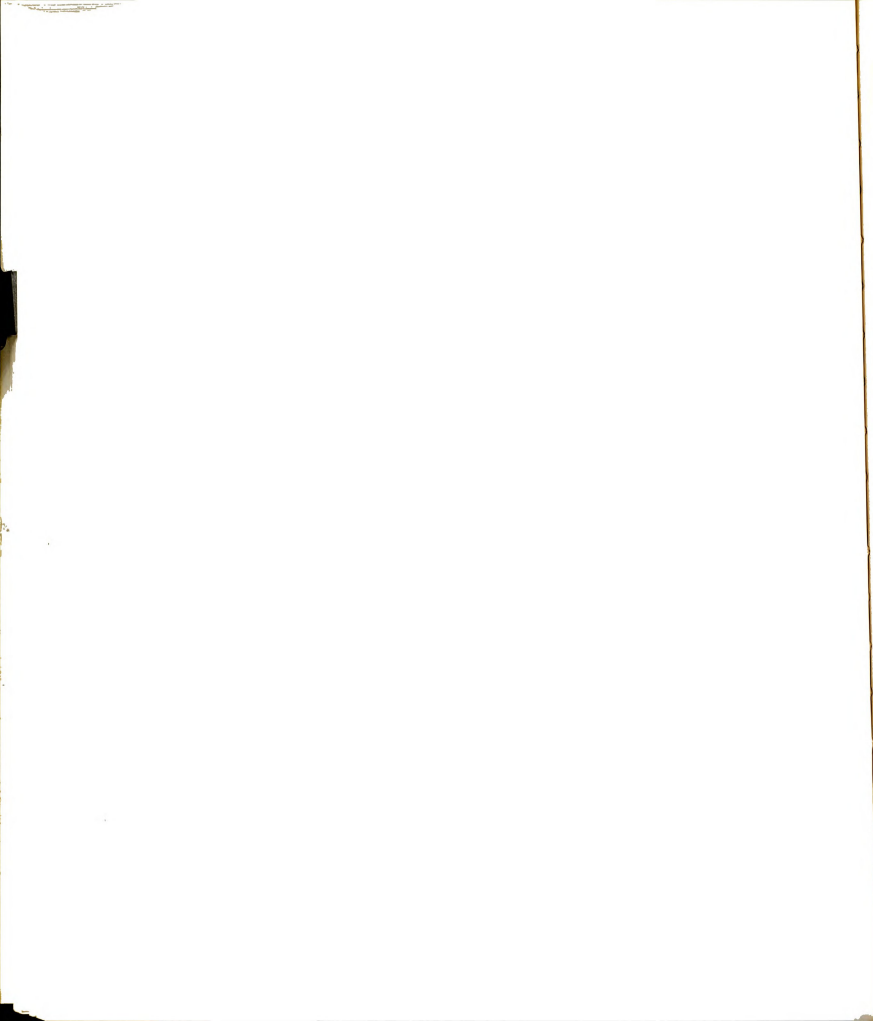
The front door of the mansion opened with a grating sound, that made the doctor turn pale. They entered a tolerably large hall, such as is common in American countryhouses, and which serves for a sitting-room in warm weather. From this they went up a wide staircase, that groaned and creaked as they trod, every



step making its particular note, like the key of a harpsichord. This led to another hall on the second story, whence they entered the room where Dolph was to sleep. It was large, and scantily furnished; the shutters were closed; but as they were much broken, there was no want of a circulation of air. (p. 393)

The description continues for more than a page. Once such a detailed realistic setting has been established, we are more likely to believe in the reality of the phantom when it appears. Again when Dolph is lost in the wilderness, the surroundings are described in detail. In fact, Irving devotes two consecutive paragraphs to the setting.

In the wilderness, Dolph, like Rip Van Winkle, finds himself in a kind of neutral ground. Though we are tempted to think it is all a dream, since Dolph did dream the beginning, the description of the setting convinces us of the reality of his whereabouts and the events which follow. With his arrival in Albany, our doubts of the reality of events are again countered by the detailed description of Antony's house which parallels the detailed rendition of the ghost house. These details, of course, help to reinforce the already established character of Antony. But also, the description gives a reality to the sequence of events experienced by Dolph. The house is real so we are more willing to believe that, despite its mysterious quality, the voyage, too, was real. In addition the warm and cheery atmosphere of Antony's house is noted by Dolph, who "could not help continually comparing

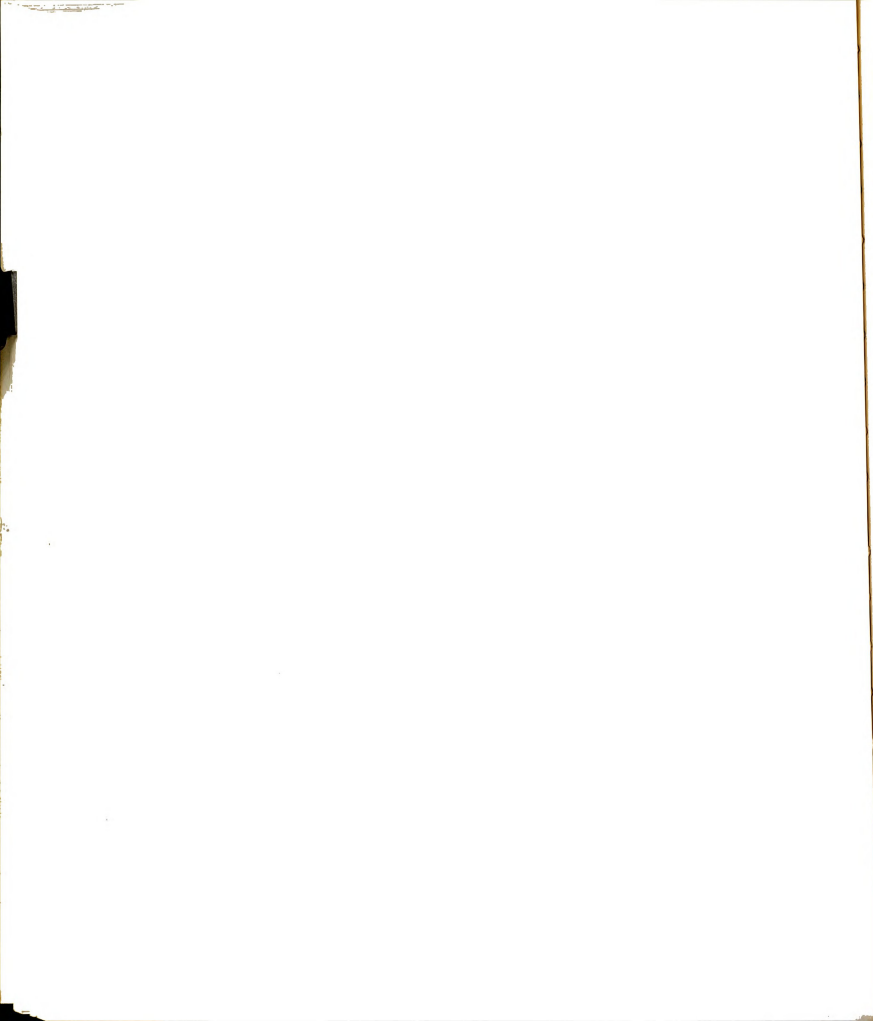


the free, open-hearted cheeriness of this establishment, with the starveling, sordid, joyless housekeeping, at Doctor Knipperhausen's" (p. 435). The contrast in the atmospheres of the two houses symbolically emphasizes Dolph's movement from the unhappiness of poverty to the joy and security of wealth.

The characterization of Dolph is one of Irving's most successful achievements. Dolph is a realistically portrayed character who is rendered in depth. (Only a few other Irving characters equal or surpass him.) We gather information about Dolph in several ways. He is first introduced to us in a direct description as the widow's only son. "He was the child of her old age; but could hardly be called the comfort, for, of all unlucky urchins, Dolph Heyliger was the most mischievous" (p. 376). This appraisal is reinforced by the comments of townspeople.

In a word, he had not reached his fourteenth year before he was pronounced, by all the neighborhood, to be a "wicked dog, the wickedest dog in the street!" Nay, one old gentleman, in a claret-colored coat, with a thin red face, and ferret eyes, went so far as to assure Dame Heyliger, that her son would, one day or other, come to the gallows! (p. 377)

Yet we are assured that "notwithstanding all this, the poor old soul loved her boy" (p. 377). We also learn about Dolph as an employee of the doctor, for Dolph fears the doctor. When he first meets the doctor, Knipperhausen looks Dolph over carefully, and "the



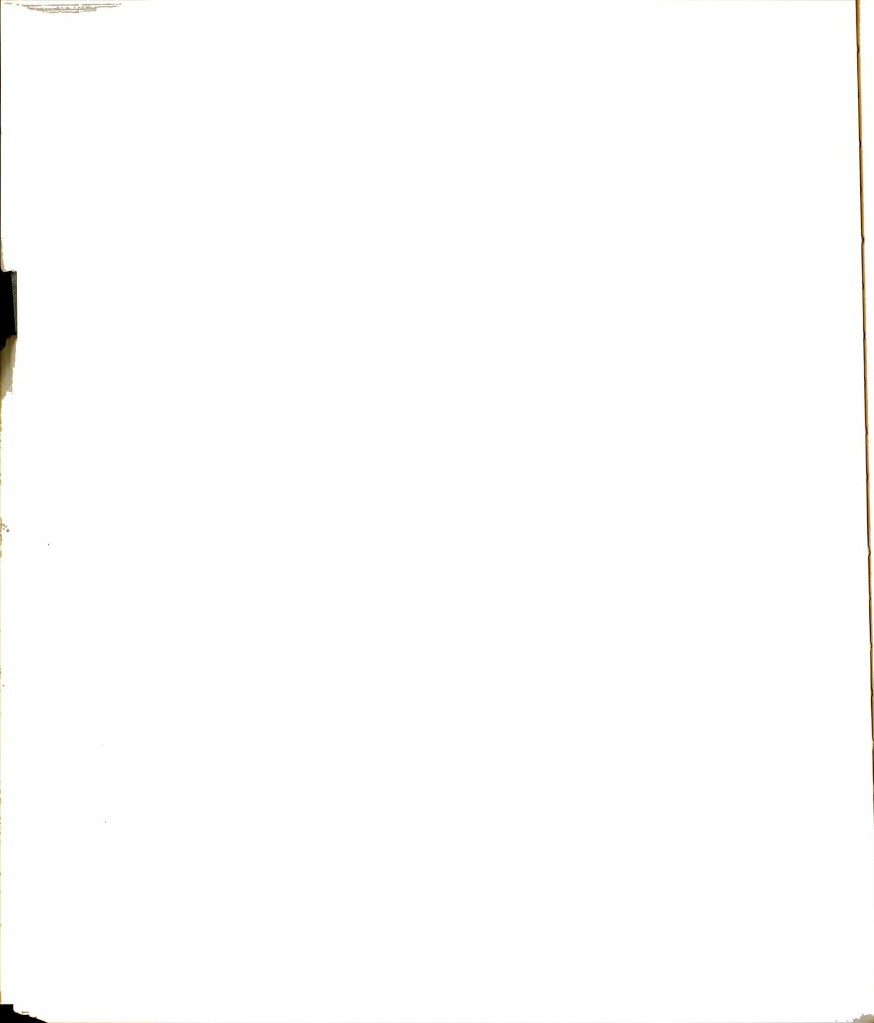
poor lad's heart quailed as these great glasses glared on him like two full moons" (p. 380). Despite his fear, however, Dolph's temperament does not improve at the doctor's. "He daily grew more and more untractable, and lost favor in the eyes, both of the doctor and the housekeeper" (p. 384). Dolph's love of adventure is demonstrated when he offers to protect the haunted house, and his determination and courage are evident, when in spite of his fear, he returns more than one night. This love of adventure and willingness to face the unknown are reinforced when he boards the mystery vessel and later when he makes his way through the wilderness.

We are told early in the story of Dolph's accomplishments.

He was, for instance, a sure marksman, and won all the geese and turkeys at Christmas-holidays. He was a bold rider; he was famous for leaping and wrestling; he played tolerably on the fiddle; could swim like a fish; and was the best hand in the whole place at fives or ninepins. (p. 388)

Later, when he joins Vander Heyden, we learn that Dolph never had felt "so completely in his element; never had he met with any thing so completely to his taste as this wild, hap-hazard life" (p. 430). Vander Heyden is delighted with Dolph and outraged that his skills were wasted in his job with the doctor.

But to think that a young fellow like Dolph, of such wonderful abilities, who could shoot, fish, run,

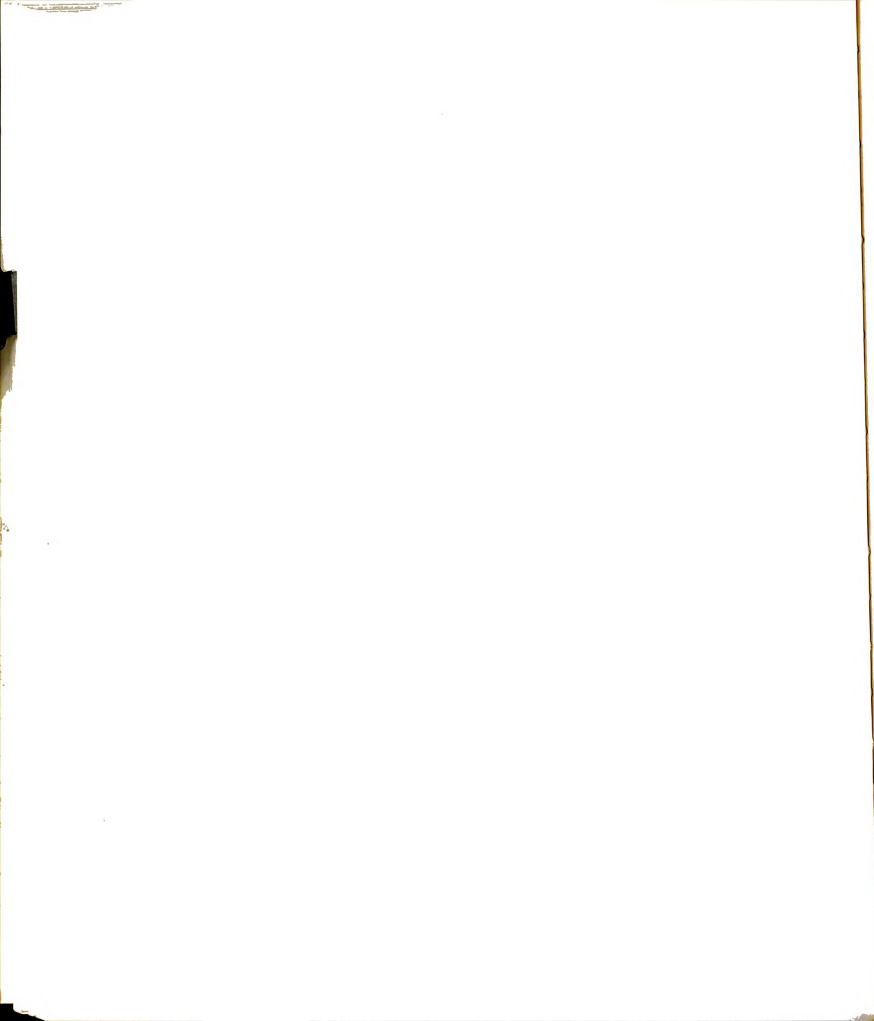


jump, ride, and wrestle, should be obliged to roll pills, and administer juleps for a living--'twas monstrous! (p. 430)

Thus, it is in the wilderness that Dolph finds his place, gains his confidence, and develops his natural abilities. Wilderness is for Dolph a kind of testing grounds on which he undergoes an initiation into manhood. Antony is his mentor for this experience, encouraging and reassuring him.

"This is your true life, my boy!" said he, slapping Dolph on the shoulder; "a man is never a man till he can defy wind and weather, range woods and wilds, sleep under a tree, and live on bass-wood leaves!" (p. 414)

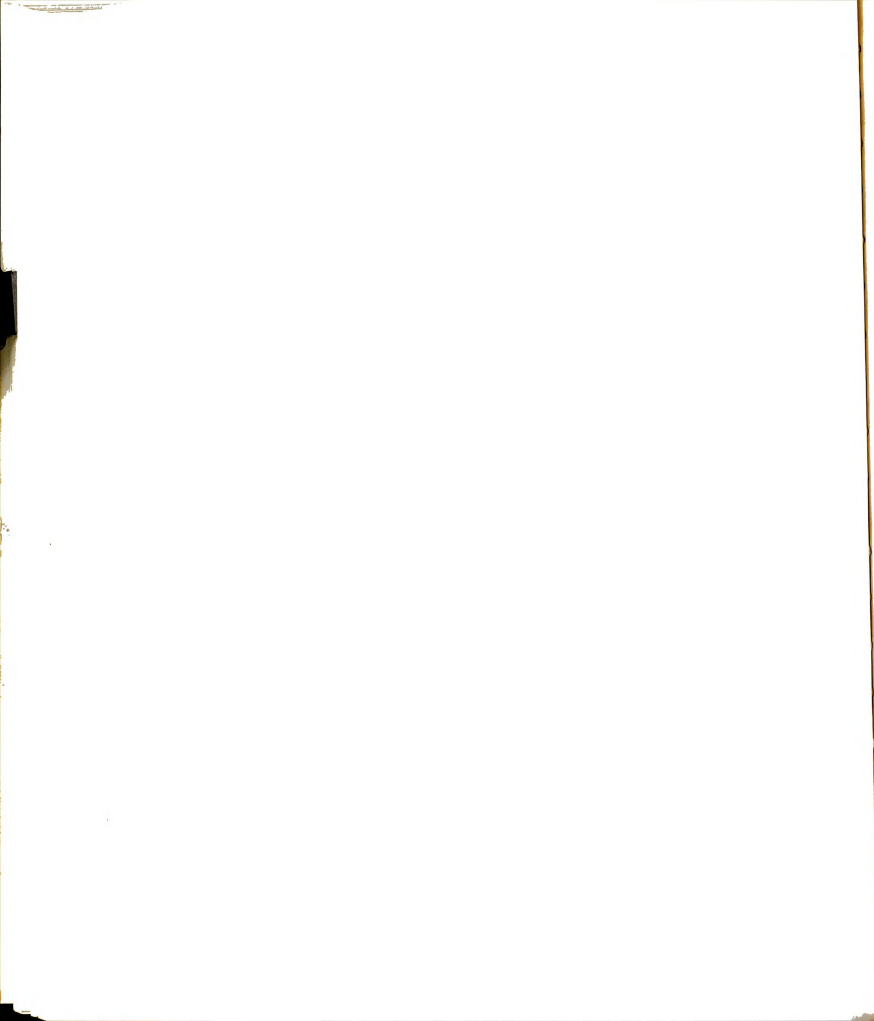
Following this reassurance Dolph hears the tale of "The Storm-Ship." It is not an accident that this supernatural tale occupies the center of "Dolph Heyliger," and is narrated in the midst of Dolph's initiation. Like the bowlers in "Rip Van Winkle," the meaning and significance of the ship is never clearly resolved. Instead the selection is filled with various theories and speculations as to what ship it is and why it has appeared. But except for the fact that she appears after storms no one knows her true identity. Dolph, however, though he too appears abandoned in the wilderness after a storm, does gain an identity. He is not suited to the role forced upon him as a doctor's apprentice. (Unlike Robin in "My Kinsman Major Molineaux" who comes from the country to the city to gain his manhood, Dolph journeys from town, through



wilderness to the city to gain his identity.) It is not until he reaches Albany and falls in love with Marie that we see evidence of his internal development. For though Dolph enjoys the cheeriness of Vander Heyden's mansion and loves the daughter of the house, he knows that he cannot aspire for her hand. He knows he will have to leave.

To linger here would be folly; he should only get deeper in love; and for a poor varlet, like himself, to aspire to the daughter of the great Heer Vander Heyden--it was madness to think of such a thing! The very kindness that the girl had shown towards him prompted him, on reflection, to hasten his departure; it would be a poor return for the frank hospitality of his host, to entangle his daughter's heart in an injudicious attachment. (p. 436)

This decision is followed immediately by an ironic narrative comment that Dolph, like other young men, might change his mind in the morning. But such indecision is never confirmed for Dolph's dreams give him new hope. Despite the narrative irony, however, Dolph's realization that he is in no position to seek the hand of Marie does indicate that he is learning to face the difficulties and complexities of his position. It is immediately after this recognition that he also recognizes the face of the man in the portrait in his chambers. It is the phantom of the haunted house. Dolph has his second dream, again of the well and in the morning when Antony explains the identity of the man in the portrait, Dolph realizes that he has also found his own identity as the



rightful heir to Killian Vander Spiegel's treasure. The change is not a drastic one, but the Dolph who returns home is a more mature Dolph. He acknowledges his previous faults as a son and promises to reform.

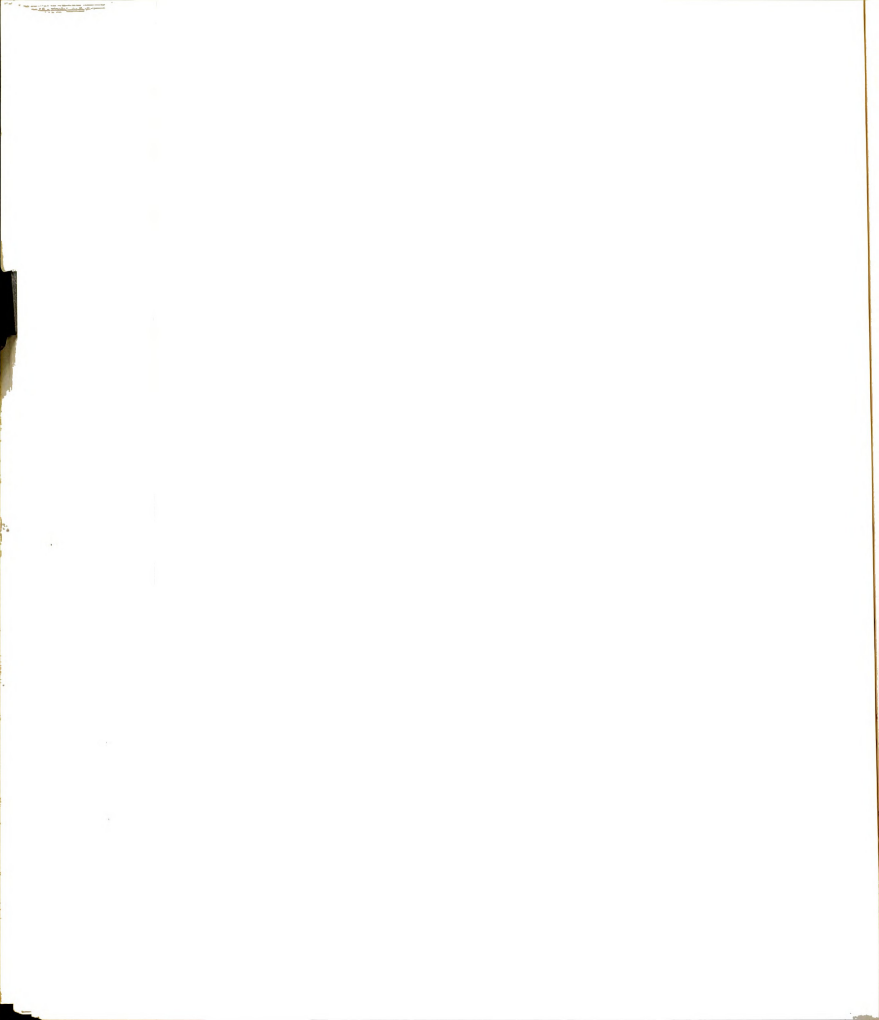
To the humble dwelling of Peter de Groodt, then, did Dolph turn his steps. On his way thither, he recalled all the tenderness and kindness of his simple-hearted parent, her indulgence of his errors, her blindness to his faults; and then he bethought himself of his own idle, harum-scarum life. "I've been a sad scape-grace," said Dolph, shaking his head sorrowfully. "I've been a complete sink-pocket, that's the truth of it. "But," added he briskly, and clasping his hands, "only let her live--only let her live--and I'll show myself indeed a son!" (p. 442)

Keeping this promise is, of course, much easier for Dolph once he finds the treasure. He wisely shows restraint and control by not announcing the discovery "but managed to bring his property into use without exciting surprise and inquiry" (p. 446). Once his wealth is secured, his social success is assured. His subsequent social and charitable contributions are satirized by the narrator.

Thus did Dolph Heyliger go on, cheerily and prosperously, growing merrier as he grew older and wiser, and completely falsifying the old proverb about money got over the devil's back; for he made good use of his wealth, and became a distinguished citizen, and a valuable member of the community. (p. 447)

Though Dolph's behavior is in part satirized, it is more the society which is satirized by the narrator.

The unity of "Dolph Heyliger" is evident after even a first reading. The use of the four framing stories,

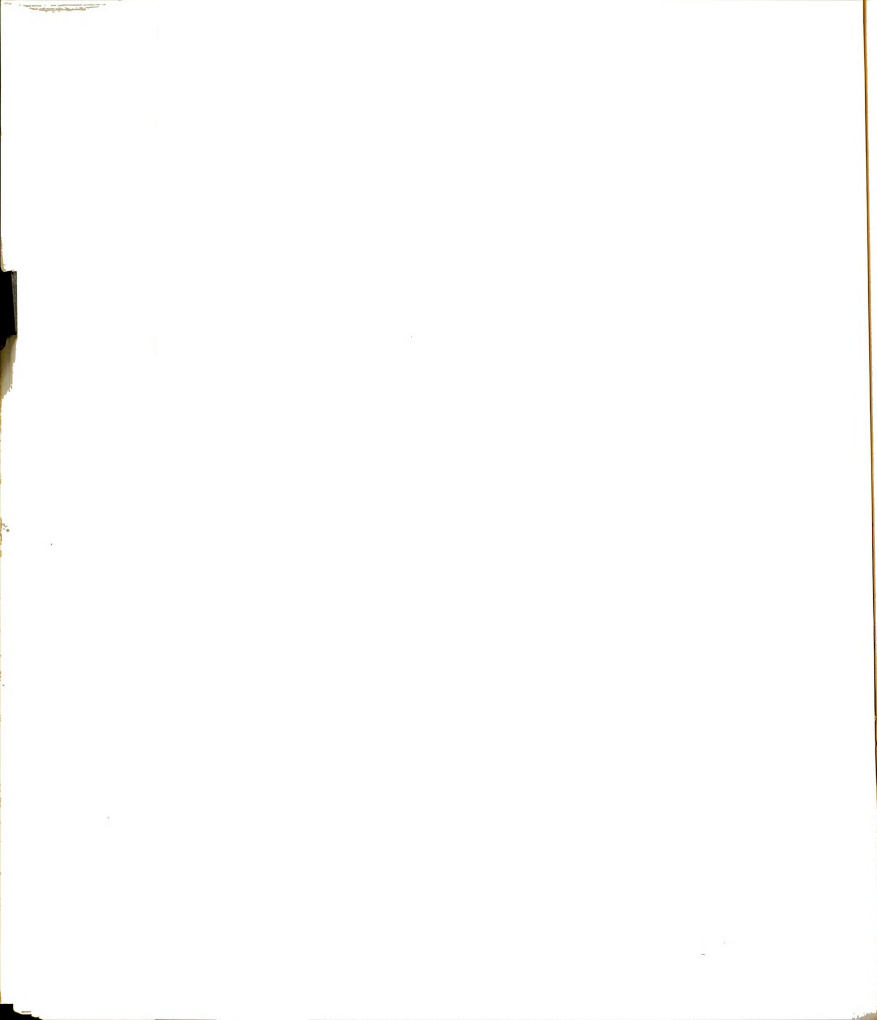


the character development of Dolph, the repetition of the appearance of the phantom and the dreams, the parallel use of two houses, the employment of the pattern of journey and return, and the alternate emphasis on focus and then summary, all help unify the story, making it one of Irving's most skillful works.

It is interesting that "Dolph" appears late in Bracebridge Hall. Having written it, Irving must have become intrigued with the possibilities of the form, for he bases the entire structure of his next collection on the framing device. Each of the four parts of Tales of a Traveller is a framing story.

"Strange Stories" which comprises Part I of Tales of a Traveller is one of Irving's most complex framing stories. It is narrated by more than one person, though the entire selection is attributed to "a nervous gentleman," the same man who narrated "The Stout Gentleman" in Bracebridge Hall. Despite the use of multiple narrators, however, the collection has a specific unity and form. "The Great Unknown," the first of the nine selections, is devoted to denying that the nervous gentleman is the author of Waverley.

The framing story begins with "The Hunting Dinner" told by the nervous gentleman. This opening selection cannot be considered a short story though as a framing story which incorporates several other tales, it does

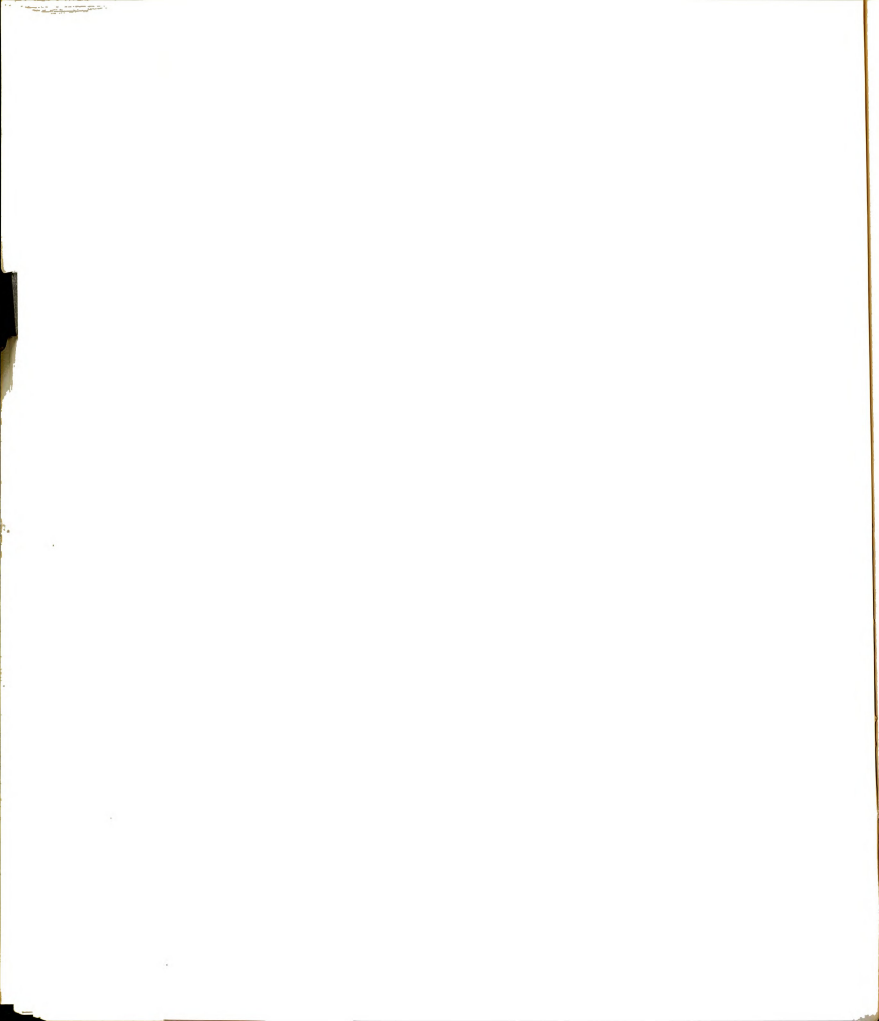


possess an interesting and complex structure that is independent in form from the other parts of Tales of a Traveller. Brought together by a hunting dinner at the hall of "a worthy fox-hunting old Baronet" (p. 17), the nervous gentleman and other guests are forced by a sudden storm to stay overnight. To pass the time they exchange ghost stories. This format of a company of people gathered together exchanging stories is a favorite of Irving and is repeated in three parts of Tales of a Traveller.

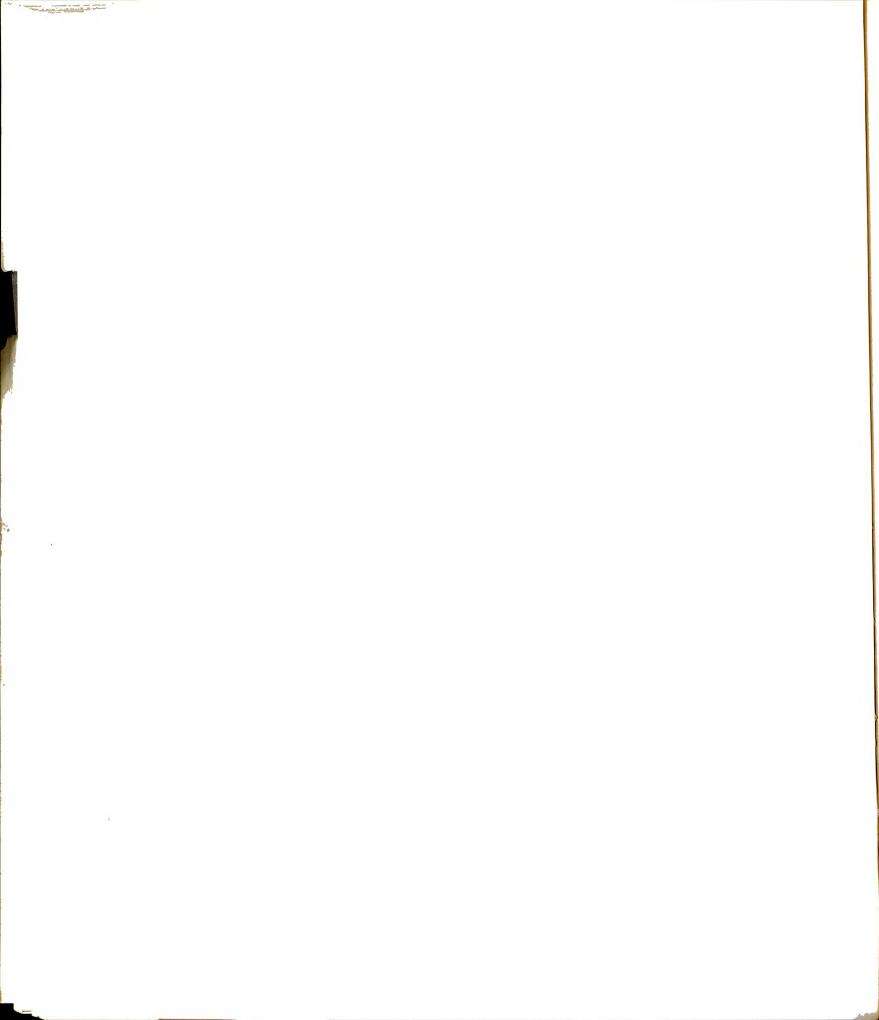
In form, the individual selections of Part I differ considerably from the sketches in Bracebridge Hall and The Sketch Book. In nearly all the selections of Tales there is a heavy emphasis on plot and conflict, though there is no selection which exhibits the technical craftsmanship of "Rip Van Winkle."

Tone is probably the most emphasized element in Part I. The framing story begins in a rather neutral tone with some evidence of the narrator's "gentle" humor and irony. Describing the post dinner discussion which slowly dies, the nervous gentleman makes the following observations:

Some of the briskest talkers, who had given tongue so bravely at the first burst, fell fast asleep; and none kept on their way but certain of those long-winded prozers, who, like short-legged hounds, worry on unnoticed at the bottom of conversation, but are sure to be in at the death. (p. 18)



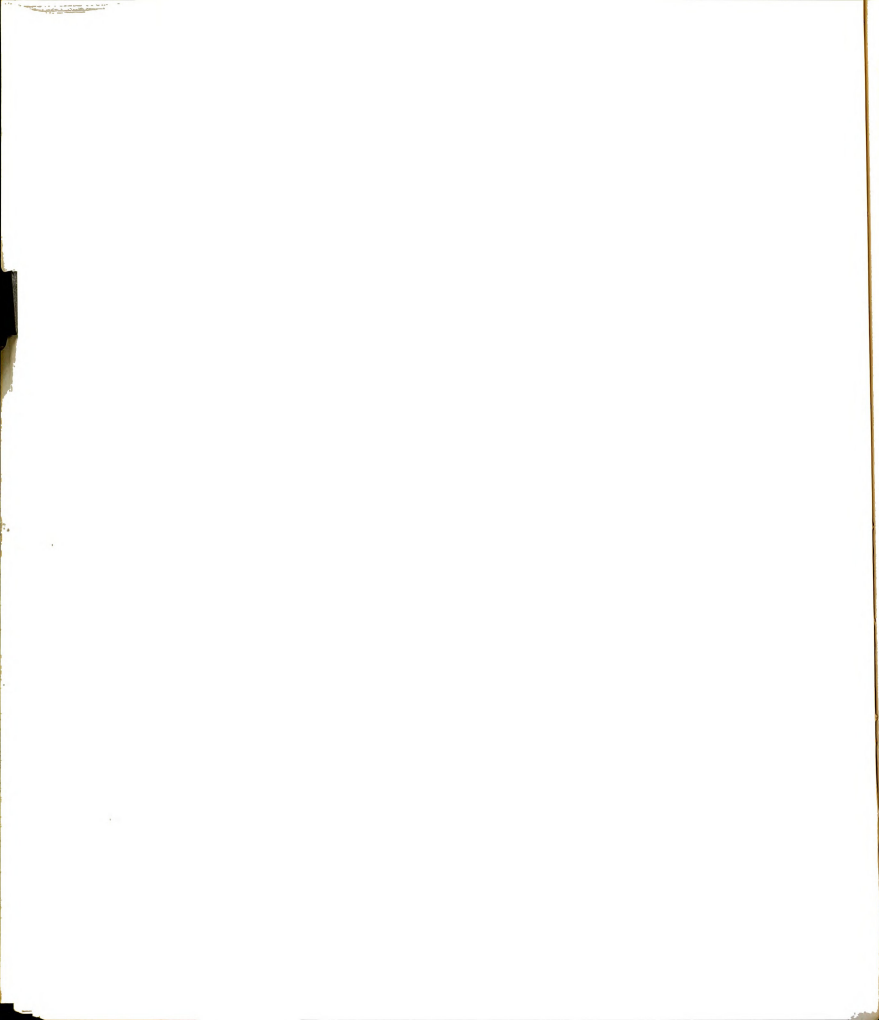
The comfortable humor of this opening selection appropriately prepares us for the next three selections which are in fact burlesques of ghost stories. In "The Adventure of My Uncle" told by the "old gentleman with the drooping lid," there is an aborted story within another aborted story. The uncle visits a friend (the Marquis) at his chateau. A storm sets in as the uncle is shown to his chamber which "had indeed a wild, crazy look, enough to strike any one who had read romances with apprehension and foreboding" (p. 27). Shortly after midnight he is "roused by the sound of footsteps, slowly pacing along the corridor." Into his room glides a female figure "all in white" (p. 29). The uncle thinks about the incident but is relatively unaffected by it and eventually turns his back to the door and falls asleep. The next morning while examining the portraits in the Marquis gallery, he recognizes a picture of the lady who was in his room. He asks who she is and the Marquis tells the story of the Duchess who was locked up during the civil war and escaped one stormy night to the chateau sleeping in the same chamber as the uncle. In fact the Marquis explains that last night was the anniversary of her visit. Just as he is about to explain "a strange, mysterious, inexplicable occurrence" (p. 36), the Marquis pauses. He starts again and then abruptly cuts off the story and changes the subject. In the same abrupt fashion the narrator with



the drooping lid also ends his story. Neither story is resolved. If we examine the form, we find that there are three stories. There is the story of the hunting party gathered together on a stormy night, one of whom tells a story about his uncle which occurs on a stormy night and that story leads to another story told by the uncle's host. In each of the stories someone experiences a mysterious occurrence. We have thus worked our way through three frames, but at the point where an explanation is expected, the two inner stories are abruptly ended. Not even a partial explanation is provided. In response to the uncle's story, the nervous gentleman notes:

There was a murmur round the table, half of merriment, half of disappointment. I was inclined to think the old gentleman had really an afterpart of his story in reserve; but he sipped his wine and said nothing more; and there was an odd expression about his dilapidated countenance which left me in doubt whether he were in drollery or earnest. (p. 38)

The burlesque is, of course, aimed partly at the poor construction of the story which allows for no satisfactory resolution, but is also aimed at the narrative style. The narrator devotes an undue amount of time describing the Marquis and his chateau. He readily admits and in fact asserts that "all this has nothing to do with my story" (p. 26). The Marquis too wanders from the topic by offering to describe the family background of the duchess. We are saved only by the

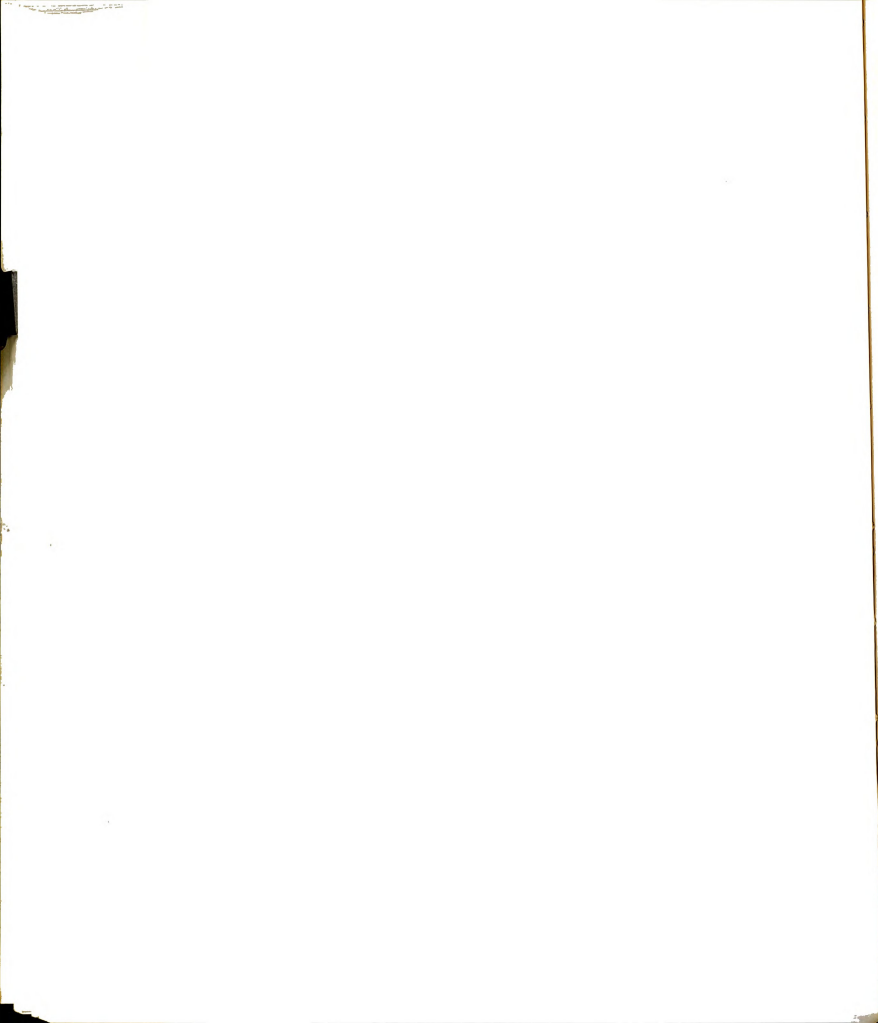


interruption of the Uncle which brings the Marquis back to the main topic. The reiteration of the stormy night of course is also a kind of burlesque of typical settings for ghost stories--a setting which Irving himself heavily relied upon.

"The Adventure of My Aunt" provides an effective contrast to the preceding tale, though it too is a burlesque. Rather than giving no explanation for mysterious events, the narrator provides a concrete, realistic explanation. Told by the "knowing gentleman, with the flexible nose," the tale describes a widowed aunt who goes to live in a house "in a lonely, wild part of the country, among the gray Derbyshire hills, with a murderer hanging in chains on a bleak height in full view" (p. 40). She begins to sense something is wrong when she retires for the night.

All of a sudden she thought she heard something move behind her. She looked hastily round, but there was nothing to be seen. Nothing but the grimly painted portrait of her poor dear man, hanging against the wall. (p. 41)

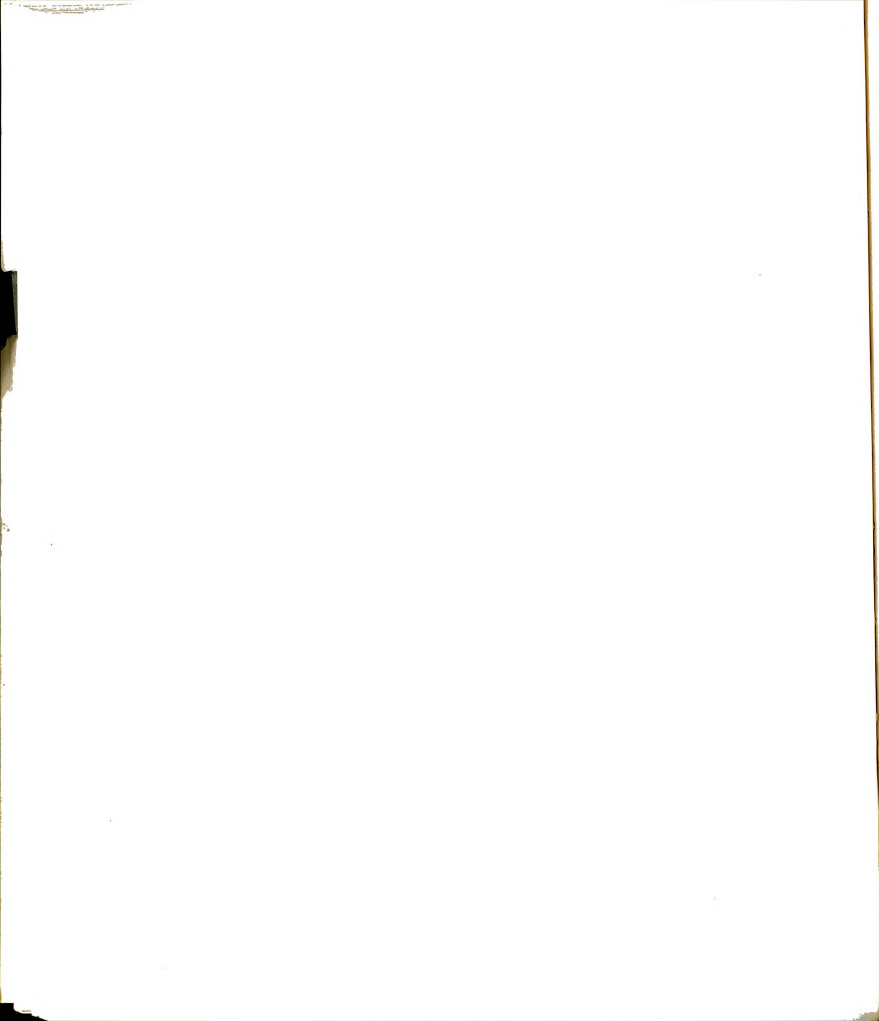
Dismissing the incident with a sigh, she is startled to hear an answering sigh, and at the same time "she thought she perceived one of the eyes of the portrait move" (p. 41). Another look and she is sure it moved. " . . . it seemed to give her a wink, as she had sometimes known her husband to do when living!" Rather than being unduly frightened or surrendering to various mysterious explanations for



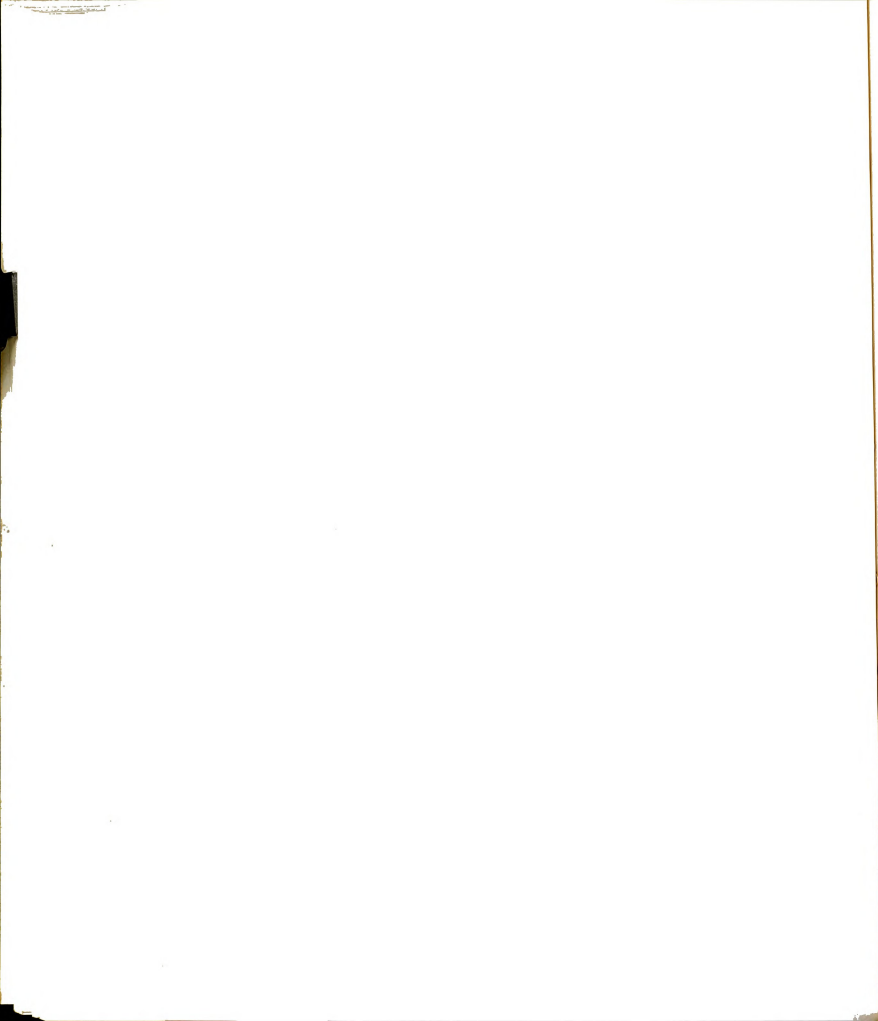
the occurrence, the aunt summons her servants and has them remove the painting from the wall and (to the surprise of the eager ghost story fan) behind the picture we discover "a round-shouldered, black-bearded varlet, with a knife as long as my arm, but trembling all over like an aspen-leaf" (p. 43). Thus, not only is there no ghostly possibilities, there is in fact, no ghost, as the inquisitive gentleman obtusely observes.

"But I don't see, after all," said the inquisitive gentleman, "that there was any ghost in this last story." (p. 44)

To further the humor we find not a ghost who frightens others but a surrogate ghost who is himself frightened and trembling. In addition to the typical resolution pattern of the ghost story which is burlesqued in this selection, the hunting party is also satirized, particularly the inquisitive gentleman who is always anxious for pat explanations. His eagerness is apparent when, after only a few lines of the aunt's story have been delivered, he prematurely inquires whether it was her husband's ghost which appeared to the aunt. Later when the varlet is discovered behind the picture the inquisitive gentleman naively asks, "Well, and who was he? No ghost, I suppose" (p. 43). Not satisfied with the story's ending the gentleman pursues his questioning seeking all the details of the affair and finally concludes that there were not any ghosts in the story after all.



The third story is perhaps more a tale of fantasy and sexual exploits than a ghost story. The sexual implications are humorously wound up with the action and symbolism of the story and are intensified by the unperceptive questions and remarks of the inquisitive gentleman. The selection is narrated by an Irish Captain about his grandfather who was "a bold dragoon." The narrator continually wanders from the topic, bringing himself back with comments such as "Well, my grandfather, as I said," and "as I was saying." There are five of these in the first two paragraphs alone. The plot of the story is a combination ghost story and sexual adventure story. The sexual implications are, however, hidden under the facade of the ghost story. The grandfather, who "had always a knack of making himself understood among the women" (p. 46), stops at an inn where he is initially refused a room. The refusal is partially caused by the landlord's dislike of the dragoon's "saucy eye." Eventually he is offered a room which is supposedly haunted and he accepts it. His sexual interests are again evident by his treatment of the women. "So he blarneyed the landlord, kissed the landlord's wife, tickled the landlord's daughter, chucked the bar-maid under the chin" (p. 49). Later he "whispered something to the girl which made her laugh, and give him a good-humored box on the ear." The narrator concluded



that "there was nobody knew better how to make his way among the petticoats than my grandfather." (p. 49)

Once settled in his room, the grandfather undresses for bed. To prepare us further for the events which follow, the tongs in the fireplace are described as seeming "to be making love to the shovel in the chimney corner, and whispering soft nonsense in its ear" (p. 51). Once in bed the grandfather becomes overheated, another sexual suggestion this time not so buried. He leaves the bed to go "strolling about the house" to "cool himself" (p. 52). The exchange between the narrator and the inquisitive gentleman at this point in the story is especially humorous. The inquisitive gentleman completely misses the sexual implications of the dragoon's behavior. When the narrator explains that his grandfather's bed was too hot, the gentleman interrupts:

"May be the maid had warmed it too much?" said the curious gentleman, inquiringly.

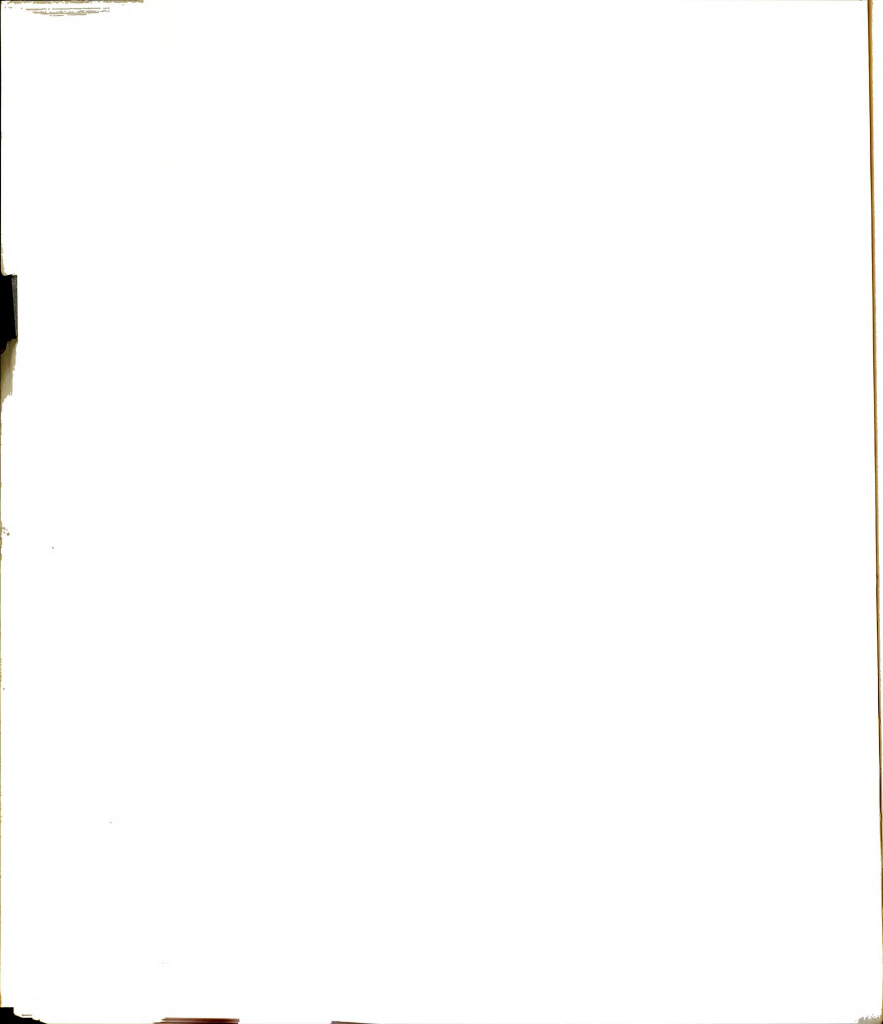
"I rather think the contrary," replied the Irishman. "But be that as it may, it grew too hot for my grandfather."

"Faith, there's no standing this any longer," says he. So he jumped out of bed and went strolling about the house.

"What for?" said the inquisitive gentleman.

"Why to cool himself, to be sure--or perhaps to find a more comfortable bed--or perhaps--But no matter what he went for--he never mentioned--and there's no use in taking up our time in conjecturing." (p. 52)

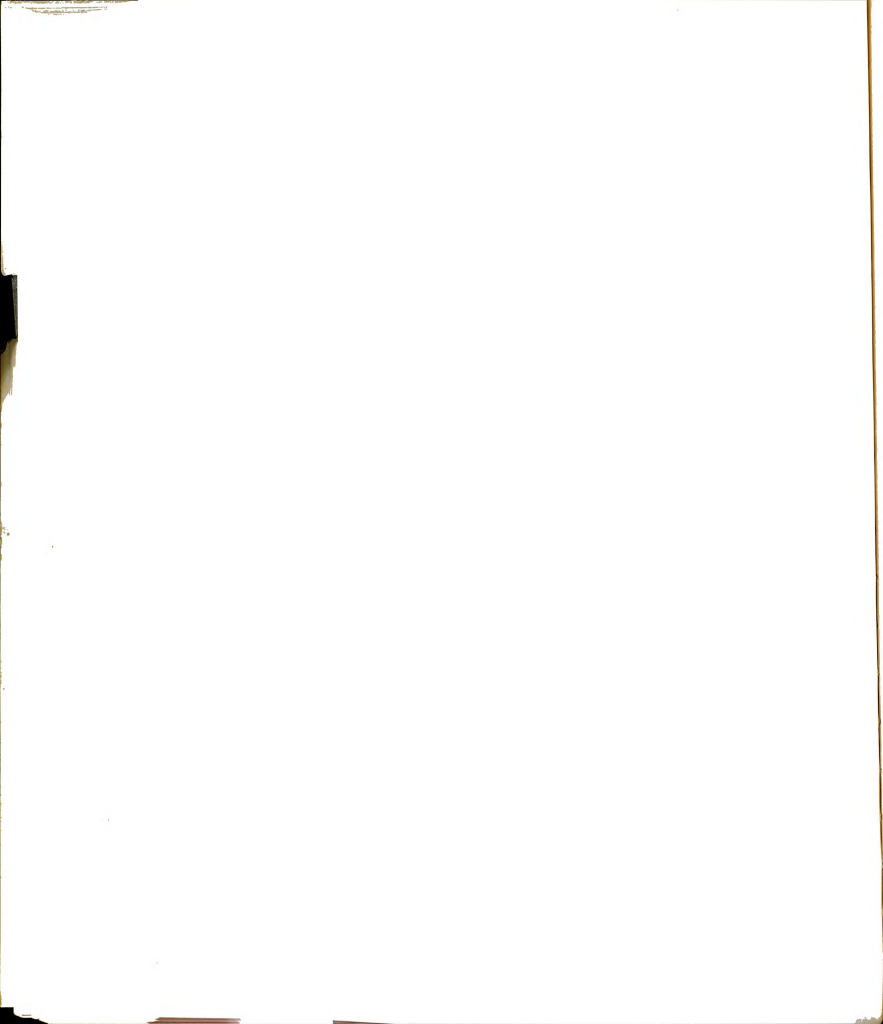
When the grandfather returns to his room he finds all his furniture dancing. "By the light of the fire he saw a pale weazen-faced fellow, in a long flannel gown and a



tall white night-cap with a tassel to it, who sat by the fire with a bellows under his arm by way of bagpipe, from which he forced the asthmatical music that had bothered my grandfather" (pp. 52-53). To the tune of the music the furniture dances round the room.

The musician now played fiercer and fiercer, and bobbed his head and his night-cap about like mad. By degrees the dancing mania seemed to seize upon all the other pieces of furniture. The antique, long-bodied chairs paired off in couples and led down a country dance; a three-legged stool danced a hornpipe, though horribly puzzled by its super-numerary limb; while the amorous tongs seized the shovel round the waist, and whirled it about the room in a German waltz. (p. 53)

The symbolic explanation for the dancing furniture is of course full of sexual implications. The realistic explanation is provided by the landlady's daughter, who recollects that "the last person who had dwelt in that chamber was a famous juggler who died of St. Vitus dance and had no doubt infected all the furniture" (p. 55). Symbolically, the dance suggests the sexual encounter between the landlady's daughter and the dragoon. When the dragoon falls during the dance, the landlord "hurried up with a candle to inquire the cause, but with all his haste his daughter had arrived at the scene of uproar before him" (p. 54). The implication is that the daughter was in fact "dancing" with the dragoon. And the humor of the dragoon's sexual exploits is made even more clear by the narrator's response



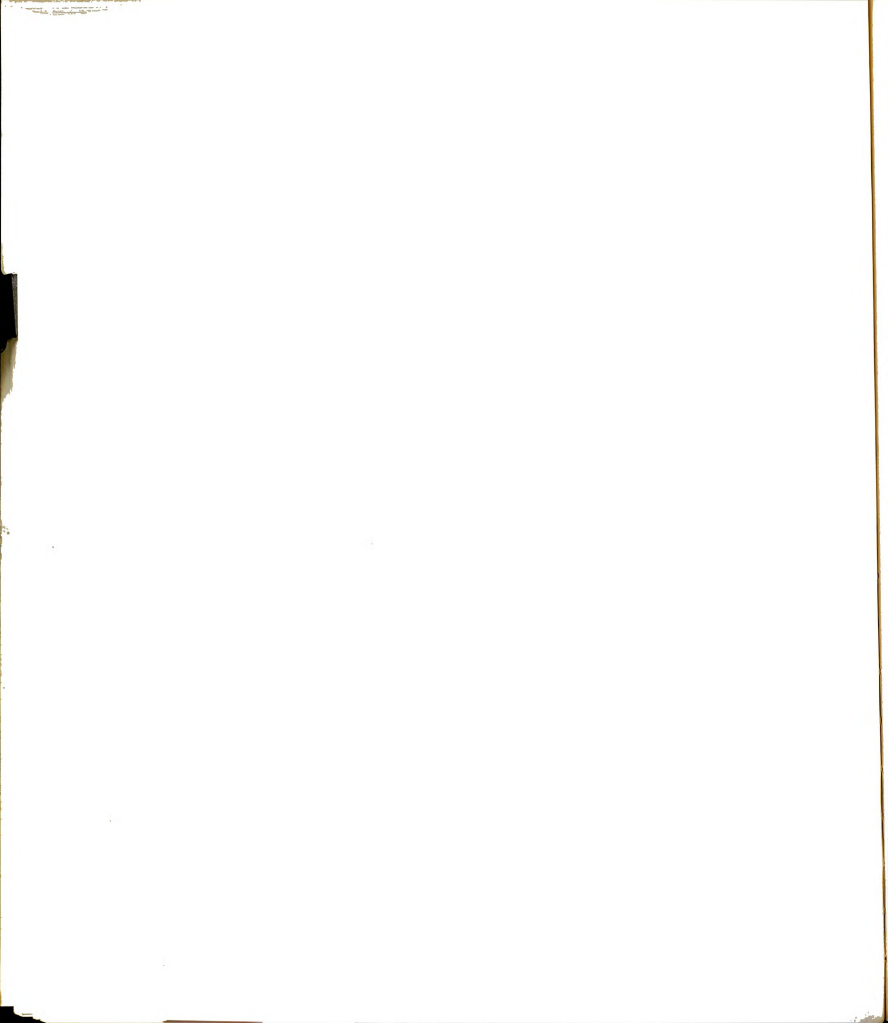
to the inquisitive gentleman's query about whether or not the grandfather slept in his room again.

"That's more than I can tell. Where he passed the rest of the night was a secret he never disclosed. In fact, though he had seen much service, he was but indifferently acquainted with geography, and apt to make blunders in his travels about inns at night, which it would have puzzled him sadly to account for in the morning." (p. 55)

The humorous quality of these opening selections is acknowledged by the hunting party when one old gentleman observes that the "stories hitherto related had rather a burlesque tendency" (p. 56).

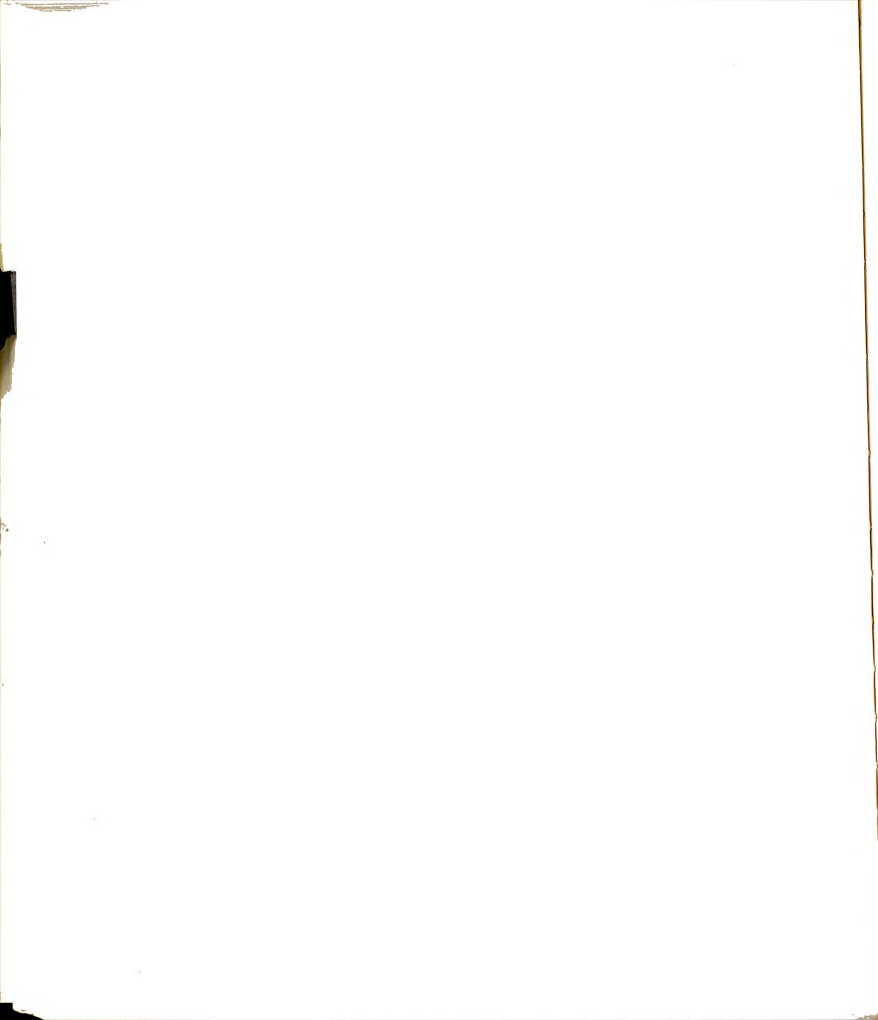
It is not only the humor and burlesque which make these opening tales successful and enjoyable to read. In addition, Irving has skillfully controlled the various elements of plot, conflict, characterization, setting, and point of view. Though the elements are not integrated in such a way as to qualify these opening selections as full-fledged short stories, there is a significant degree of narrative skill apparent.

Plot is heavily emphasized throughout Tales of a Traveller, and the humor and interest of these opening spoofs relies heavily on plot, unlike the plotless sketches of Bracebridge Hall. Conflict in all three tends to consist of obvious external struggles which contrast fact and fiction, reality and supernatural. The central characters undergo no searching internal turmoil and usually are merely frightened, confused or



amused by the events occurring around them. The characterization tends to be one dimensional, but still adequately motivated to make the story at least partially credible. The uncle is described as "a man not easily frightened" (p. 29), and the events which follow verify this. The aunt is described as "a lady of large frame, strong mind, and great resolution: she was what might be termed a very manly woman" (p. 39). Her actions too demonstrate these qualities. The grandfather's sexual exploits fulfill the behavior promised by his flirtations and confidence with women.

Setting functions rather obviously in the first two selections. The use of storms in the uncle's adventure is one method of burlesque employed in the story and thus contributes to its humor. The storm and the country house of the aunt's story are then accepted a bit warily by the reader. We are not altogether surprised by the twist in the outcome of the story, that is, the realistic explanation. It begins as a ghost story should, but being conditioned by the first selection, we are prepared to find a departure from the usual formula, despite the use of a typical ghost story setting. And, of course, part of the function of the setting is tied to the narrator who in all three stories overemphasizes irrelevant details of the setting and frequently wanders from the topic. In the dragoon's story the function of the



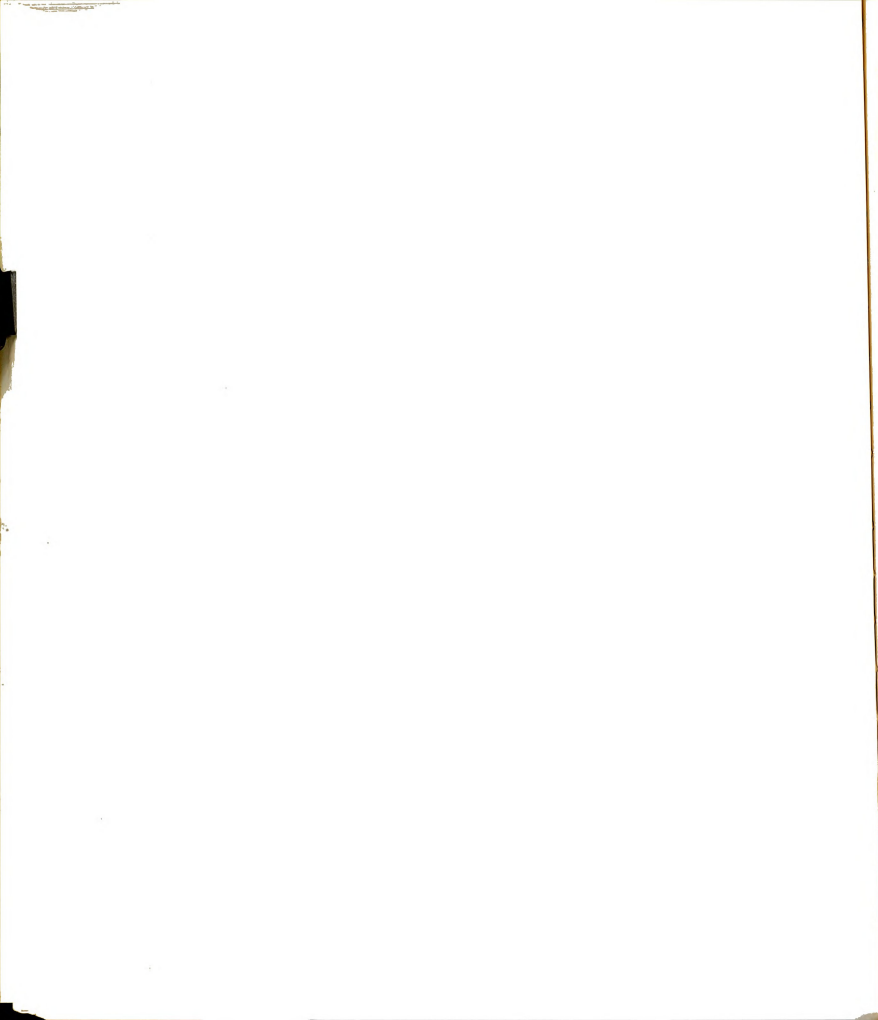
setting is obvious. The symbolic use of the furniture in the haunted room is used to reinforce action, characterization and theme.

Dialogue is used in all three selections to aid characterization and to dramatize the action. In the uncle's story the dialogue is limited to questions and answers which lead to explanations. The dialogue in the aunt's story is restricted to the hunting party rather than the tale itself. The effect of the aunt's story, in fact, relies heavily on the interaction between the listeners and the storyteller. The inquisitive gentleman's persistent interruptions add humor as does the comments made by other listeners. At one point in the story when we are told that the aunt was setting her hair and thought she saw the eye of the portrait move, one of the listeners interrupts:

She ascribed these sounds to the wind oozing through the rat-holes of the old mansion, and proceeded leisurely to put her hair in papers, when, all at once, she thought she perceived one of the eyes of the portrait move.

"The back of her head being towards it!" said the storyteller with the ruined head, --"good!" "Yes, sir!" replied dryly the narrator, "her back being towards the portrait, but her eyes fixed on its reflection in the glass." (p. 41)

These exchanges add not only humor to the tales but help to weave the framing story and the individual tales together. In the dragoon's story the humorous exchanges between the narrator and the inquisitive gentlemen are

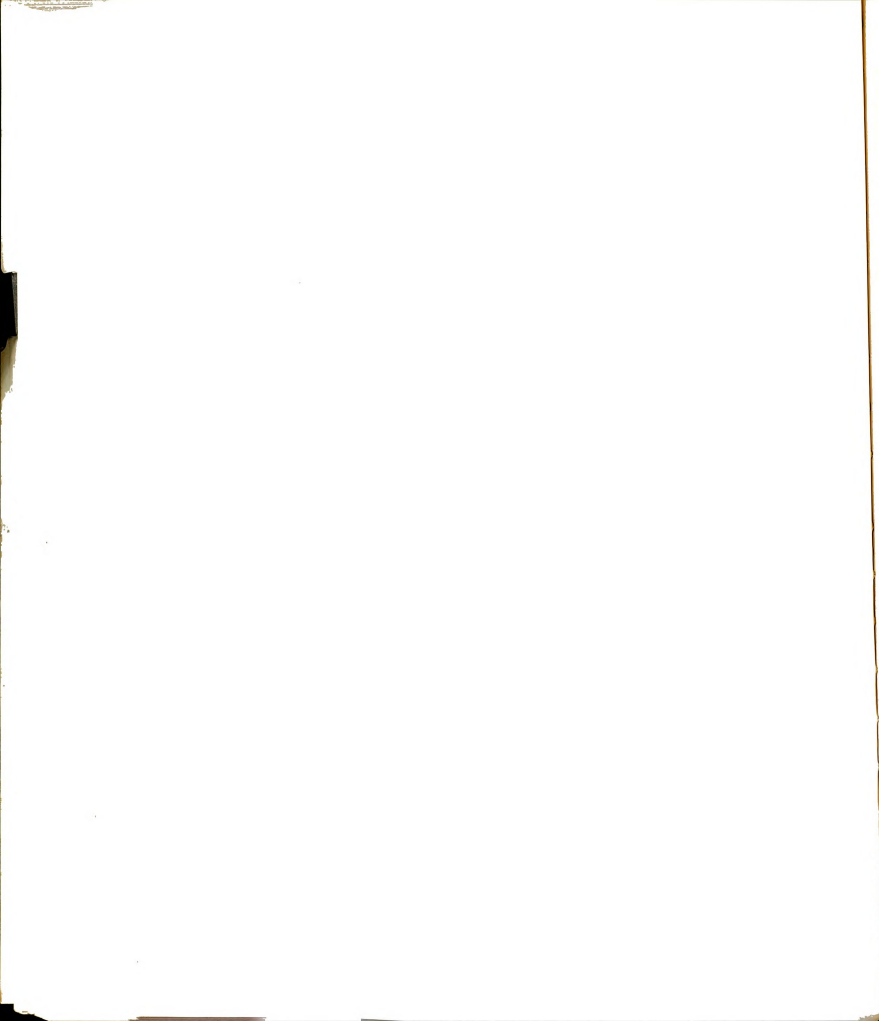


more frequent and more subtle than in the previous stories. In fact much of the success of the dragoon's story rests on these exchanges.

The function of the narrator varies in each of the stories though it can be said of the entire Tales of a Traveller that the narrator is further removed, less physically apparent, than in either The Sketch Book or Bracebridge Hall. In these stories Irving three times removes himself from the tales. Crayon is responsible for the entire volume, The Nervous Gentleman for Part I, and three separate narrators for each of the opening three stories. This combination allows for considerable variety in tone, emphasis, form, and point of view. In the first story a light tone is established by the narrator's wandering off the topic. Rather than being a weakness, this wandering is an effective technique to achieve humor. In fact each of the narrators seems appropriately suited to the tale he tells. The narrator of the uncle's story is "an old gentleman, one side of whose face was no match for the other" (p. 22).

The eye-lid drooped and hung down like an unhinged window-shutter. Indeed, the whole side of his head was dilapidated, and seemed like the wing of a house shut up and haunted. I'll warrant that side was well stuffed with ghost stories. (p. 22)

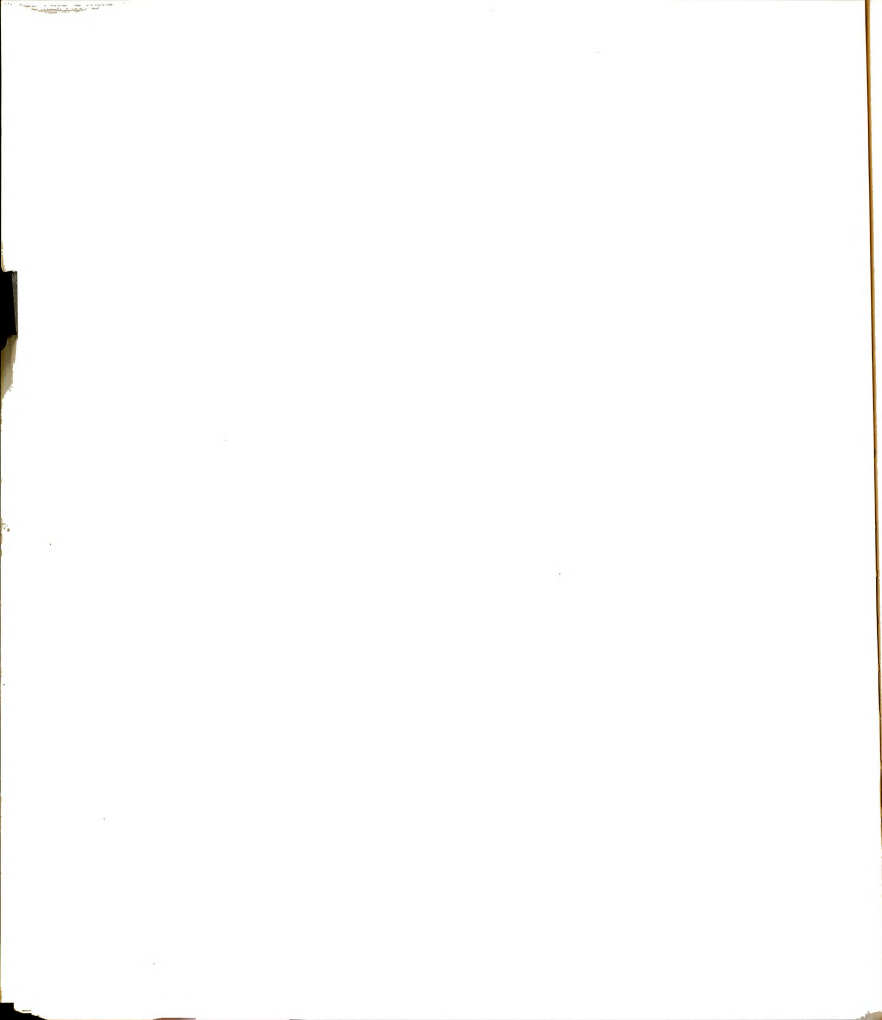
Just as the face of the narrator is off balance so his story is off balance. Half of his story, the resolution, is never revealed. The narrator of the aunt's story is



rather matter-of-fact in his attitude. He is not easily irritated by the pestering questions of the inquisitive gentleman, nor is he caught off balance when the old gentleman points out that the aunt must have had eyes in the back of her head. Like his aunt he is practical. His dispatch of the story parallels his aunt's handling of the "mysterious" situation. Finally, the tale of the dragoon, a chapter taken out of his own family history, reveals not only the grandfather's sexual sportiveness, but the narrator's capacity to sport and jest.

Thus, what Irving has done is to interrelate the framing story and the individual tales so that each reinforces and illuminates the other. The narrators are in part characterized by the tale they tell and in part by the conversations they have with the hunting party. In addition they are characterized by the direct description of them which is offered by the nervous gentleman.

The fourth tale of Part I, "Adventure of the German Student," acts as a pivotal story between the humor and lightness of the opening three selections and the seriousness of the last three. These last three are also skillfully integrated with the framing story. We move from a spoof of form, narration, plot, and atmosphere in the first two selections to a humor which is more thematically oriented in the third selection. In the fourth selection the emphasis is again thematic, though

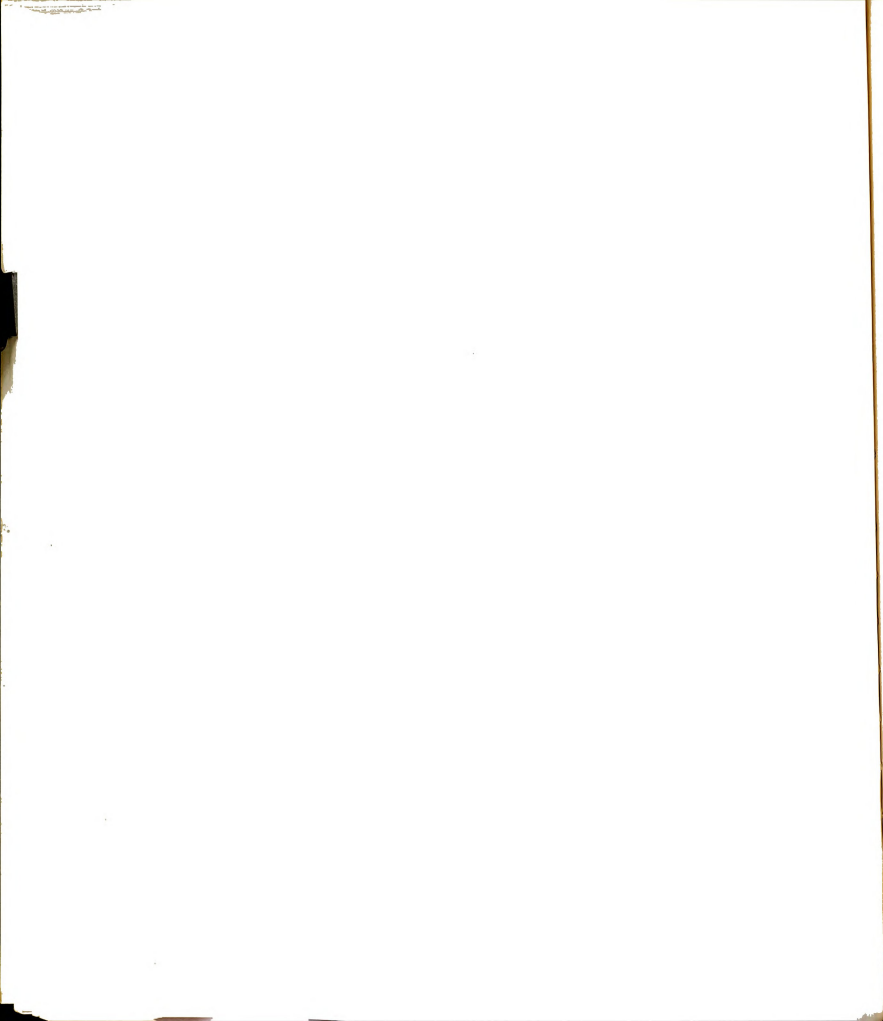


instead of dealing with the sporting, humorous aspects of sexual adventure, the tale of the German student concentrates on the darker more frightening aspects of love. It in fact deals with the psychological possibility of falling in love with death.

The link between the third and fourth selection offers some preparation for the switch in mood.

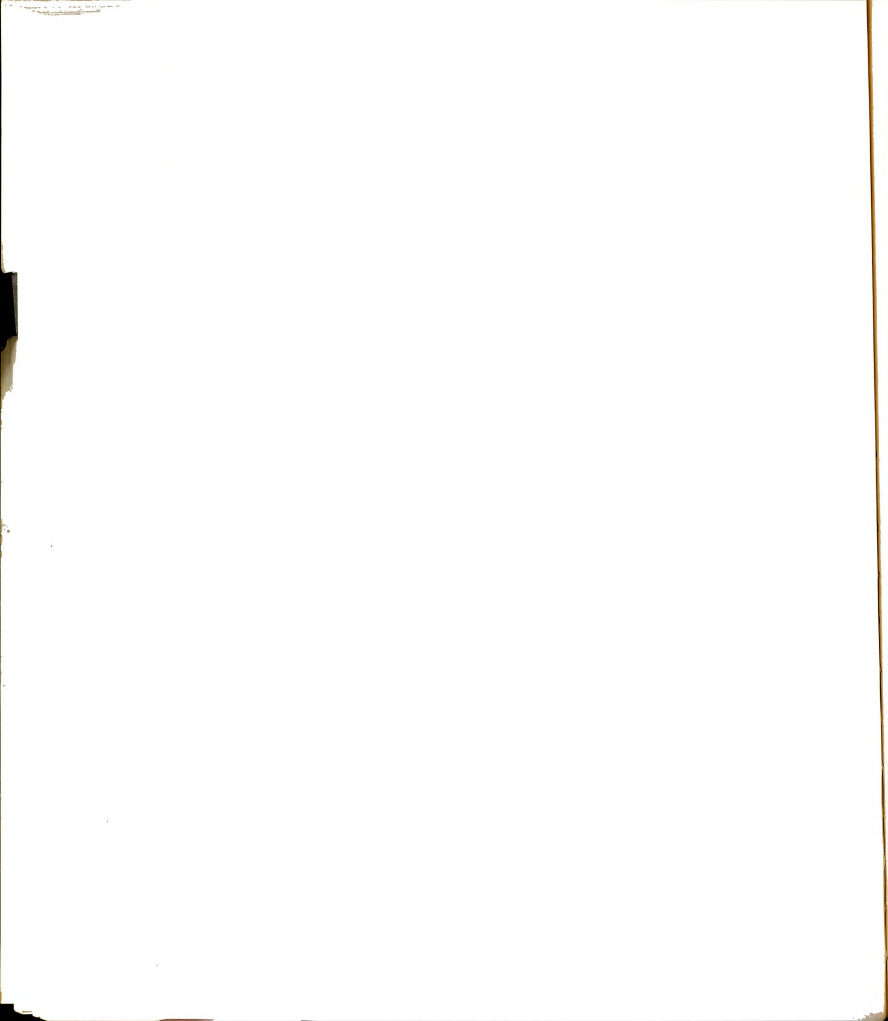
There was a little pause after this rigmarole Irish romance, when the old gentleman with the haunted head observed, that the stories hitherto related had rather a burlesque tendency. "I recollect an adventure, however," added he, "which I heard of during a residence at Paris, for the truth of which I can undertake to vouch, and which is of a very grave and singular nature." (p. 56)

This introduction combined with the position of the story (following the humor of the opening selections) gives it both some credibility and some shock value. It begins with the usual trappings of a ghost story--a storm at night--and then focuses on the typical mysterious personage, in this case a young student who thinks that there is "an evil influence hanging over him; an evil genius or spirit seeking to ensnare him and ensure his perdition" (p. 57). Ironically enough it perhaps is easier to accept these premises because of the previous selections. They poked fun at the tradition, exaggerated its weaknesses, but once this has been accomplished (our doubts are dispelled in the former laughter) we can or are willing to accept a well-written story in the ghost tale tradition. To help reinforce the seriousness of the



tale, Irving allows no interruptions from the inquisitive gentleman except at the very end. Also, the narrator is relatively detached. He tells the tale in the first person but he neither participates in the story nor does he include himself as part of the central focus.

The plot of "Adventure of the German Student" is relatively simple. The student, Gottfried Wolfgang, leads a secluded life of intense study which eventually affects his mind and body. "His health was impaired; his imagination diseased" (p. 57). He believes that he is being influenced by an evil spirit. He goes to Paris at the beginning of the revolution and spends hours in the libraries. "He was, in a manner, a literary ghoul, feeding in the charnel-house of decayed literature" (p. 58). In spite of his isolation, or perhaps because of it, he is a "passionate admirer of female beauty" and he repeatedly dreams of a particular beautiful woman. One night on his way home during a storm he sees a "shadowy form" at the foot of the scaffold. When he approaches closer, he discovers that she is the woman in his dreams. He offers her shelter and once they are in his lodgings, he, "in the infatuation of the moment," declares his passion for her and pledges himself to her "forever" (p. 63). He leaves her the next morning to find larger apartments and when he returns, he finds her dead. The police are summoned and they inform him that the woman



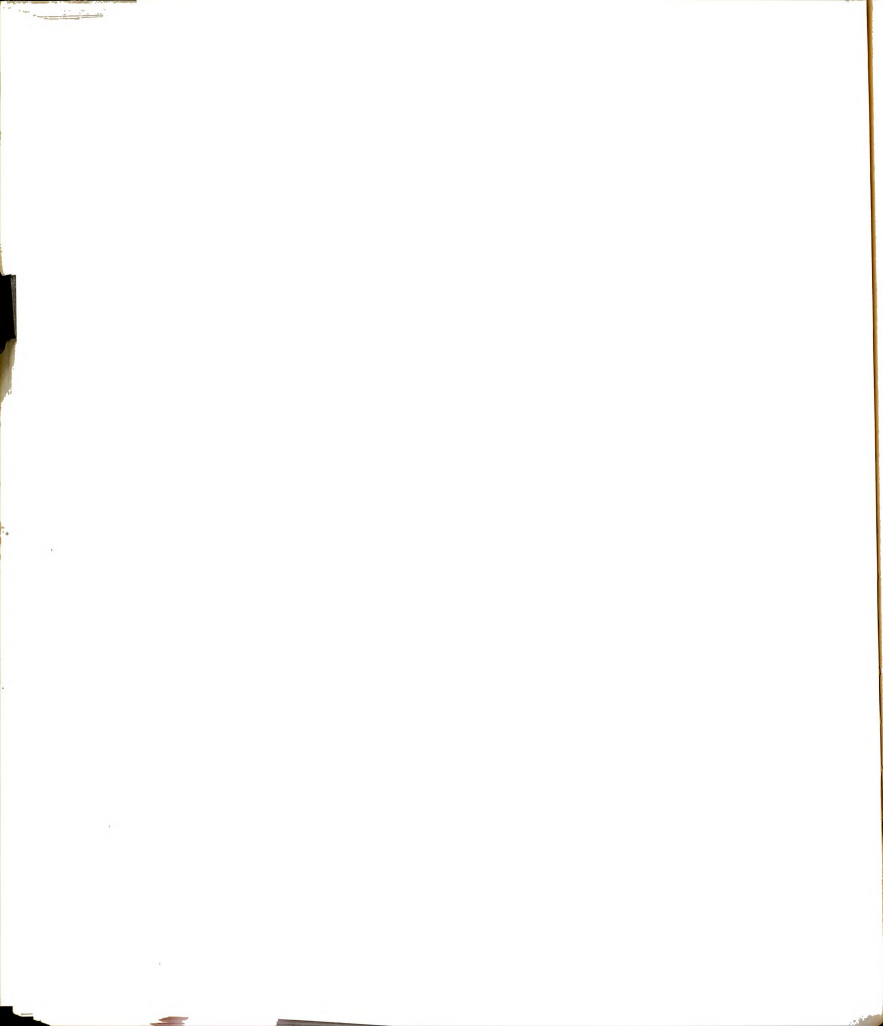
had been guillotined the previous morning. He bursts into a frenzy declaring that the fiend has taken possession of him and eventually he becomes distracted and dies in a mad-house. The narrator ends the tale by assuring the inquisitive gentleman that the story is true.

"I had it from the best authority. The student told it me himself. I saw him in a mad-house in Paris."
(p. 64)

The story verges on being a complete short story, the major weaknesses being a lack of adequate dramatization and internal conflict. Much of the story is "told" rather than dramatically revealed. Dialogue between Wolfgang and the mysterious female stranger helps to advance the theme and the plot but does only a little to dramatize the story. The tale works quite effectively as a kind of psychological parable warning of the dangers of introspection and alienation. Shutting himself off from the world the student eventually ends up pledging himself forever to death, for the woman is an apparition of his introspective mind. The supernatural-psychological quality of the story is similar to what Hawthorne later does in several of his tales.

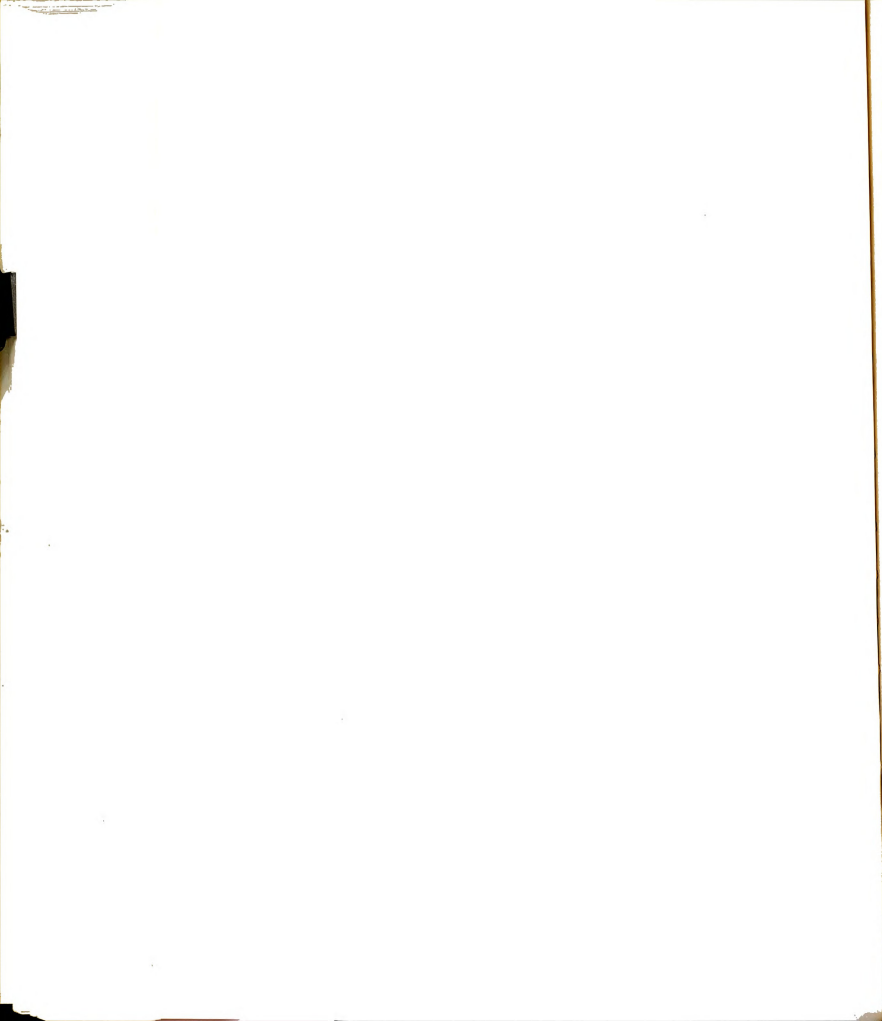
The last three selections in Part I are inter-related and functionally integrated with the framing story (as are the last three selections in Parts III and IV).

The "Adventure of the Mysterious Picture" brings us back once again to the hunting party and the nervous



gentleman resumes his function as narrator and also becomes the central figure in the selection. After a discussion of the previous tales the Baronet refers to a haunted room which one of his guests will be sleeping in that very night. Unknown to him, the nervous gentleman gets the room and the major portion of the selection is devoted to his uncomfortable and unpleasant experience in the room. The effects of a painting hanging in the room are so psychologically unnerving that at length he is forced to abandon the room and sleep on the sofa downstairs. When his retreat is exposed the following morning at breakfast, he is soundly teased by the company until the Baronet interrupts to offer the history of the picture.

The next selection, "Adventure of the Mysterious Stranger," is narrated by the Baronet and introduces his relationship with Ottavio who is the mysterious stranger. We view Ottavio largely through the eyes of the Baronet. But in the final selection, "The Story of the Young Italian," we hear the history recorded and given to the Baronet. Thus, once again we have moved into a multiple frame arrangement, this time of a more serious mood. The framing story of the nervous gentleman's experiences in the room with the picture (a kind of serious variation of the experiences of both the uncle and the aunt) prompts the narrator (Baronet) to explain how he got the picture, and thus, he tells a story within which there is another

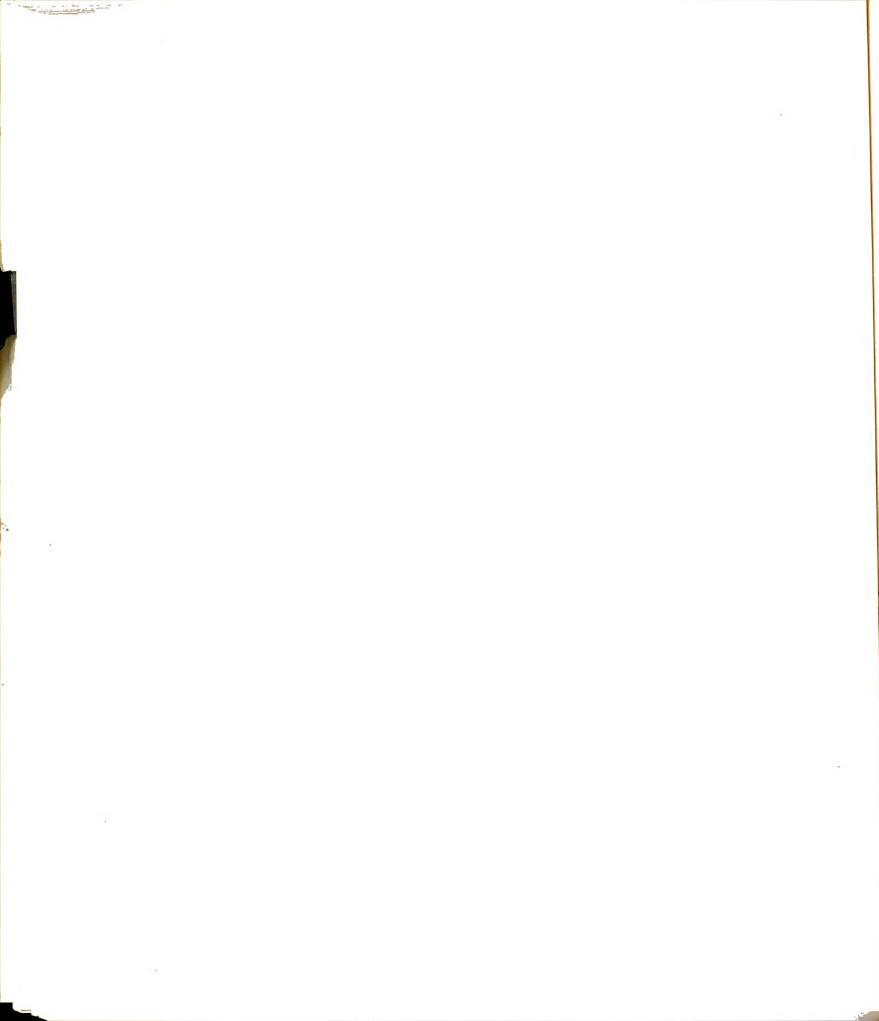


story. Contrary to the opening three selections these last three, though exaggerated, are evidently intended to be taken seriously.

The first of these three, "Adventure of the Mysterious Picture," is the most technically skillful. It makes effective use of the narrator's perceptions since he is the central character. In contrast to the narrative distance of both the uncle's and aunt's story, the sensations experienced by the nervous gentleman in his room are rendered in detail. The experience begins with ill-defined psychological reactions:

Some strange indefinite evil seemed hanging over me which I could not avert; something terrible and loathesome oppressed me which I could not shake off. I was conscious of being asleep, and strove to rouse myself, but every effort redoubled the evil; until gasping, struggling, almost strangling, I suddenly sprang bolt upright in my chair, and awoke. (p. 67)

The narrator eventually identifies the picture as the source of his apprehension. He attempts to avoid looking at it, but finds that "its chilling, creeping influence over my flesh and blood was redoubled" (p. 67). He describes the visage as having an expression of agony, "the agony of intense bodily pain; but a menace scowled upon the brow, and a few sprinklings of blood added to its ghastliness" (p. 68). A storm rages outside all this time, and once the narrator is in bed, his imagination operates in even more vivid detail.



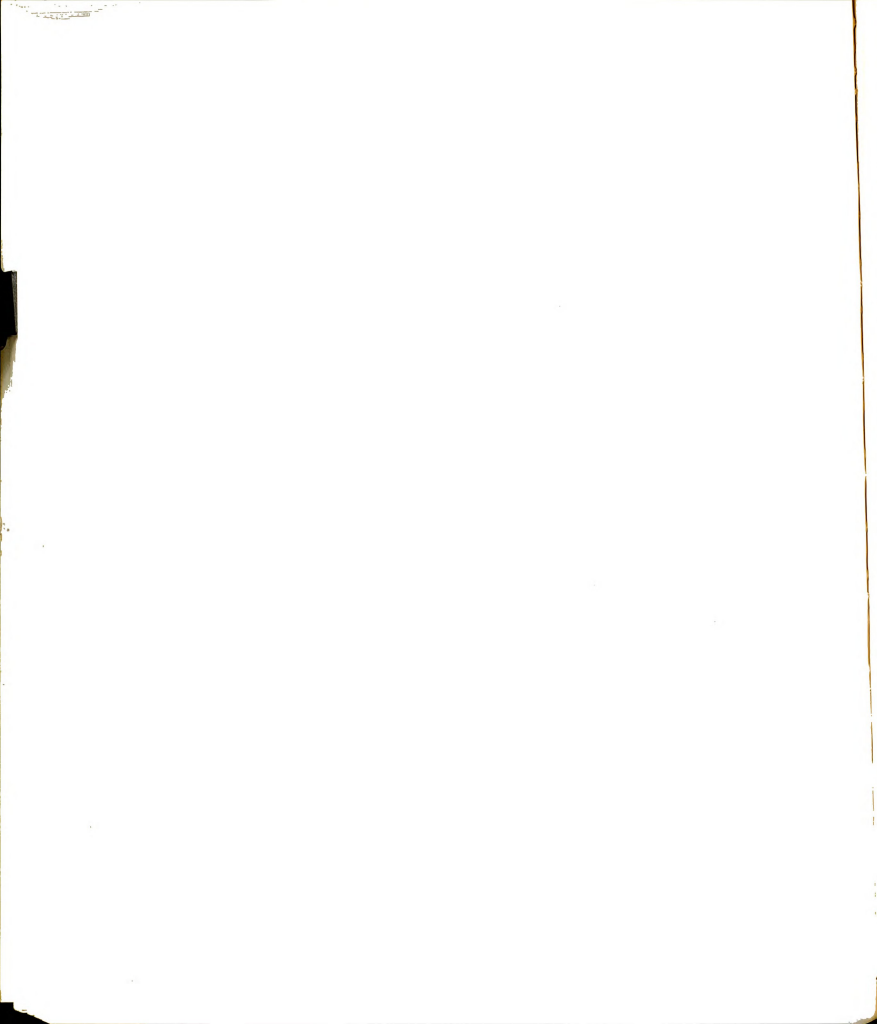
The faintly lighted apartment had all the qualifications requisite for a haunted chamber. It began in my infected imagination to assume strange appearances--the old portraits turned paler and paler, and blacker and blacker; the streaks of light and shadow thrown among the quaint articles of furniture gave them more singular shapes and characters. (p. 69)

When his fire goes out, the sense of oppression intensifies.

The fire gradually went out, and left the room in darkness. Still I had the idea of that inexplicable countenance gazing and keeping watch upon me through the gloom--nay, what was worse, the very darkness seemed to magnify its terrors. It was like having an unseen enemy hanging about one in the night. Instead of having one picture now to worry me, I had a hundred. I fancied it in every direction. (p. 70)

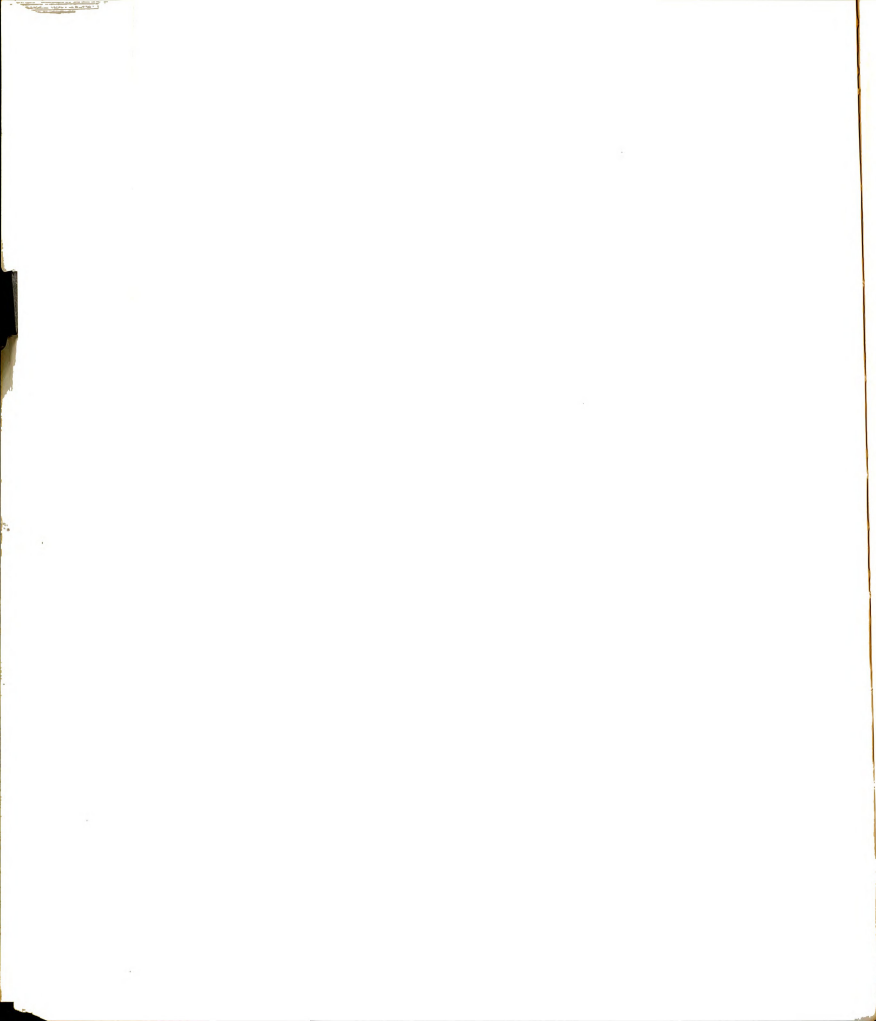
Once he leaves the room, however, he is released from the influence and easily falls asleep on the sofa. Though the external details in this selection are perhaps not as vividly rendered as they are in a Poe story, they are more effective and more immediately convincing than in the opening selections of Part I.

The conflict in these last selections, however, is similar to that of the opening tales. Once again the conflict is an external one. The central character struggles against the psychological influences of the painting which he senses to be supernatural. In fact in all the stories the central character struggles with the mysterious or the supernatural, but in "Adventure of the German Student" the external conflict can be viewed simply as a reflection of the student's internal



disturbance. An obvious plot story "The Mysterious Picture" does have a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end, but it cannot stand independently as a story for its thematic resolution depends upon the two selections which follow it.

In one sense "The Adventure of the Mysterious Picture" is an introduction for the next selection, "Adventure of the Mysterious Stranger," which is narrated by the Baronet. He sketches his relationship with Ottavio, how he first met him, and what he thought of him. Because considerable attention is given to the Venetian setting and the narrator's perceptions of the young stranger, the piece reverts to the earlier style of a Crayon character sketch. Once again the narrator acts as a kind of outside observer, first seeing Ottavio in the casino then following him. Later he watches Ottavio whenever he encounters him at concerts and the theater. Bit by bit he collects information about the stranger and eventually the narrator asserts, "I gradually edged myself into his acquaintance" (p. 80). The rest of the selection is devoted to the narrator's attempt to learn more about his new friend. The piece has almost no dialogue; the events are described from a narrative distance; and the behavior of Ottavio is lacquered in romanticism. This selection, too, is not adequately resolved though the plot line does provide an ending.

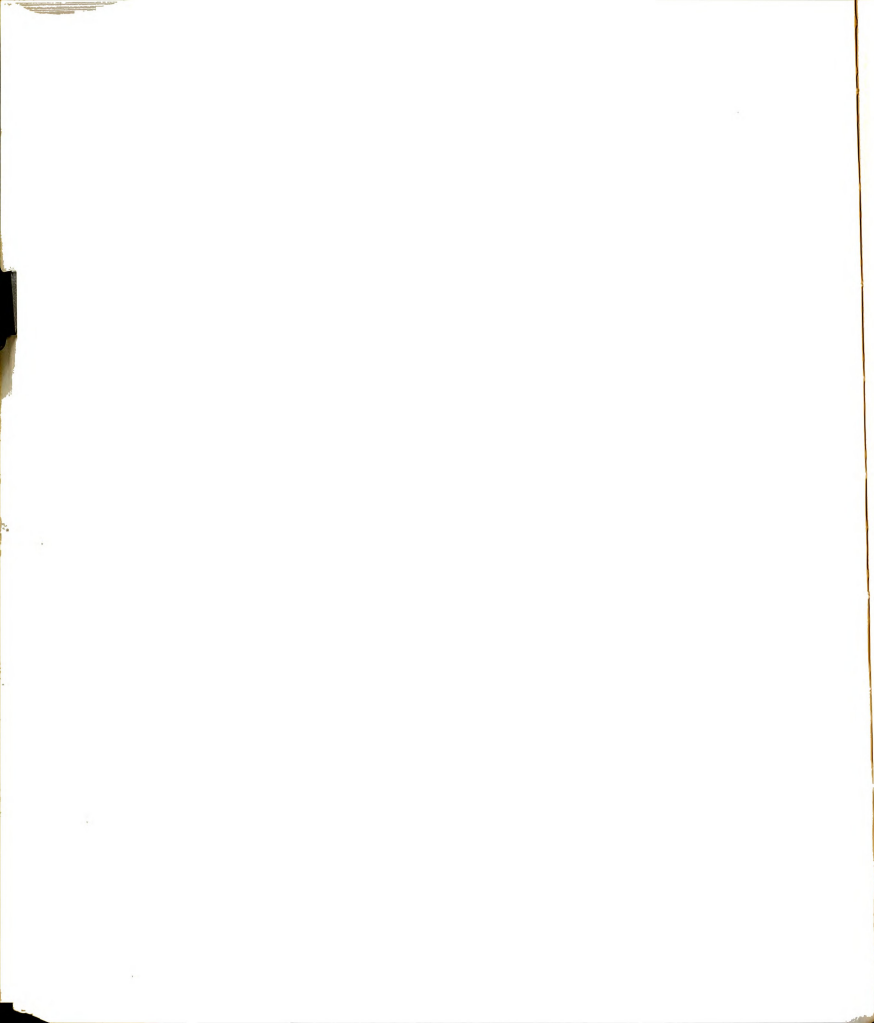


Ottavio leaves the picture and a written explanation with the Baronet and disappears forever. Thus, in a more serious repetition of the uncle's story, two tales in a row end with partial explanations, each pointing to the next for its full resolution.

Ottavio's written explanation, "The Story of the Young Italian" provides the final selection of Part I. The piece does stand independently as a story, an autobiographical narration of Ottavio's earlier struggles with adversity. But though the piece includes several specific incidents and ample background information, it nevertheless fails as a story. The narrative voice "tells" rather than "shows." The reader is seldom directly involved; there is little dialogue; and though we learn a considerable amount about Ottavio, his actions and the actions of others are often insufficiently motivated. The piece is melodramatic, overly sentimental--almost gothic--in both plot and style. Ottavio's extreme emotionalism is a typical example:

I showed when quite a child, an extreme sensibility. Everything affected me violently. While yet an infant in my mother's arms, and before I had learned to talk, I could be wrought upon to a wonderful degree of anguish or delight by the power of music. (p. 86)

In addition Ottavio's father demonstrates an extreme indifference to his second son.



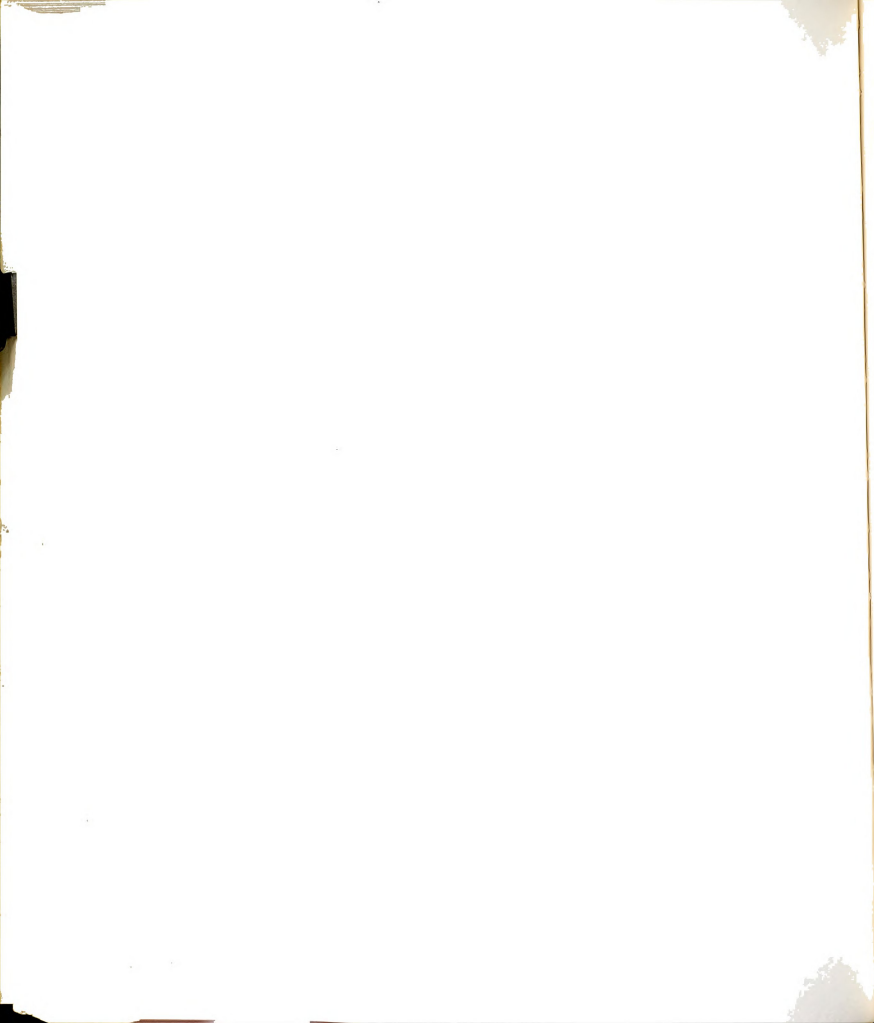
My father, as I have already said, never liked me-- in fact, he never understood me; he looked upon me as wilful and wayward, as deficient in natural affection. (p. 87)

Later his father treats him cruelly. When Ottavio escapes from the convent to which his father has sent him, his father does not even recognize him.

I found some difficulty in getting admitted to my father's presence; for the domestics scarcely knew that there was such a being as myself in existence, and my monastic dress did not operate in my favor. Even my father entertained no recollection of my person. I told him my name, threw myself at his feet, implored his forgiveness, and entreated that I might not be sent back to the convent. (pp. 91-92)

Such unnatural extremes of human behavior (though in the gothic tradition) are indeed difficult to accept, particularly when so little motivation is offered. Some evidence of Ottavio's willfulness and uncontrolled passion is provided--he says later that he strikes a servant--but his father's treatment of him strikes the reader as being undeserved.

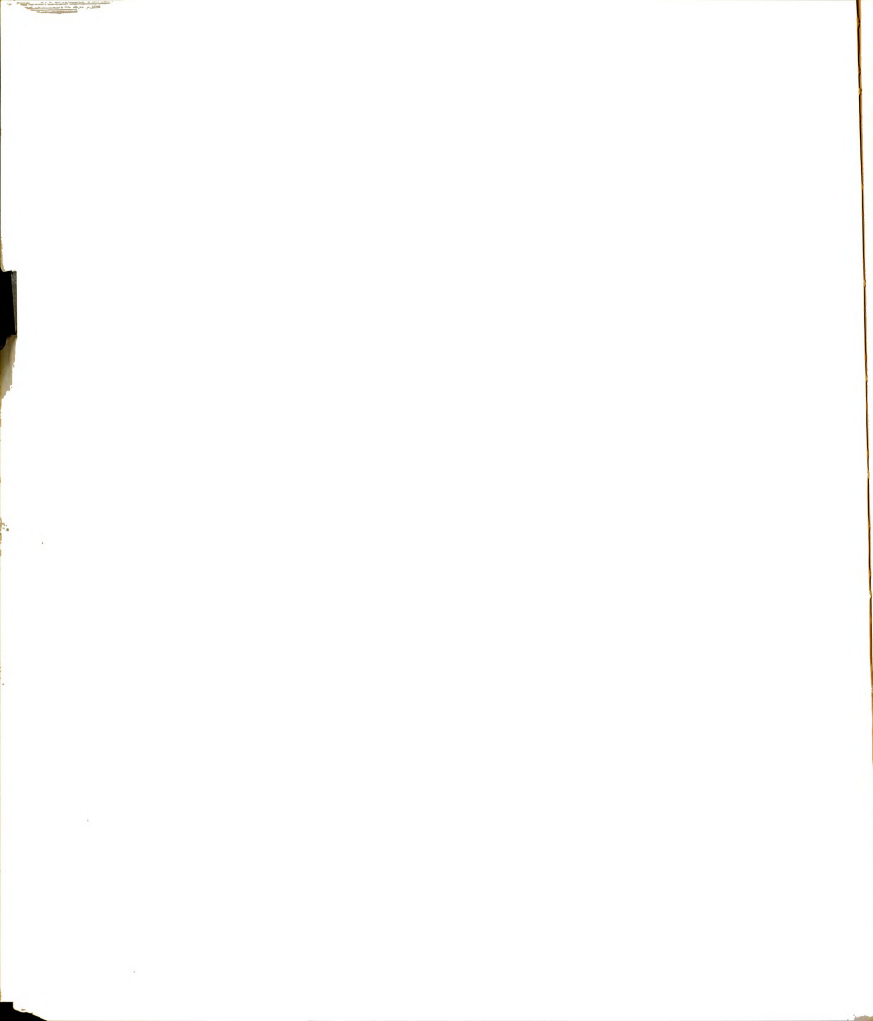
Ottavio is thus made the victim of a cruel father and later he is subject to cruel, largely undeserved, twists of fate, the final blow being his realization that his beloved has been tricked into marrying another. His experiences are not tightly organized into a plot, however. Instead one event follows another in an even rhythm which makes the story tedious to read. There is no central focus, no incident which is more heavily emphasized than



another. Rather, we plod from one to the next, each described in the same sentimental but detached narrative voice. There is some tension created in the latter part of the story, when Ottavio, after a long absence, returns to find his beloved married to another. But even this discovery makes him appear to be a victim of fate and the murder of his rival, though it provides a sensational plot resolution, does not offer any internal resolution for Ottavio. It is interesting in a way, that Irving ends the story at the point where a modern story might begin, for it is after he has so irrevocably contributed to his own damnation (by committing murder) that Ottavio's internal struggle begins to take shape. Such an internal struggle would provide interesting material for a short story.

With the conclusion of Ottavio's story, we return briefly to the framing story. The Baronet, acquiescing to the company's wish, shows them a painting which they suppose to be the mysterious painting, but in the final paragraph we learn that he in fact has shown them another painting.

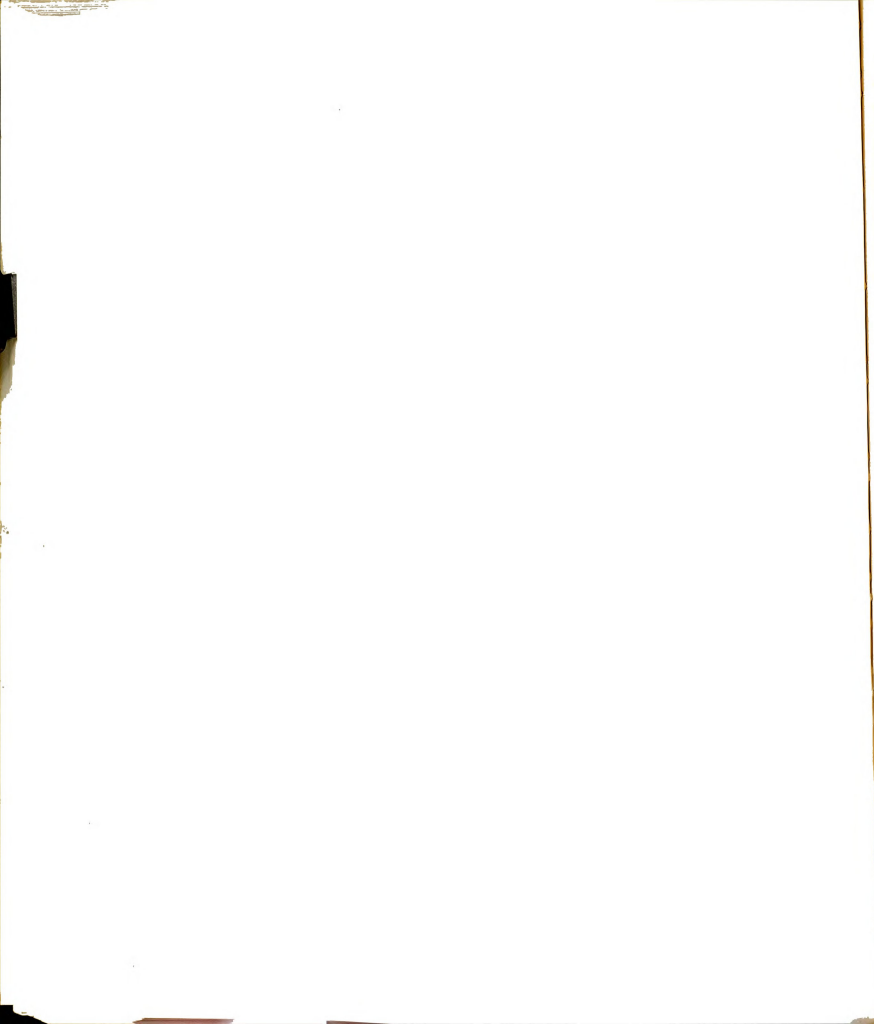
I saw that some of them were in a bantering vein, and did not choose that the memento of the poor Italian should be made jest of. So I gave the housekeeper a hint to show them all to a different chamber!
(p. 120)



With this final revelation Part I ends, having come full circle back to the hunting party which opened the framing structure.

It is true that "Strange Stories" has structural weaknesses, but the selections demonstrate that Irving was capable of considerable artistic control of the elements of fiction. Even with its sometimes obvious flaws, Tales of a Traveller promises Irving's further artistic development. But his next collection fails to fulfill that promise. Nothing in The Alhambra matches the skill evident in the framing structure of Tales of a Traveller, though the Spanish collection does contain two selections, "A Ramble in the Hills," and "Governor Manco and the Soldier" which are crudely constructed framing stories.

"A Ramble in the Hills" might best be described as a sketch containing an episodic series of legends, with the entire selection acting as an introduction to a longer tale which follows. In "Ramble" Irving walks in the hills with his favorite guide Mateo who tells tales along the way, for "there was scarce a rock, or ruin, or broken fountain, or lonely glen, about which he had not some marvellous story" (p. 237). The framing story is thus unified by the setting. At least seven legends are mentioned in the course of the walk, some of them only briefly. An archway in the foundation of the Tower of



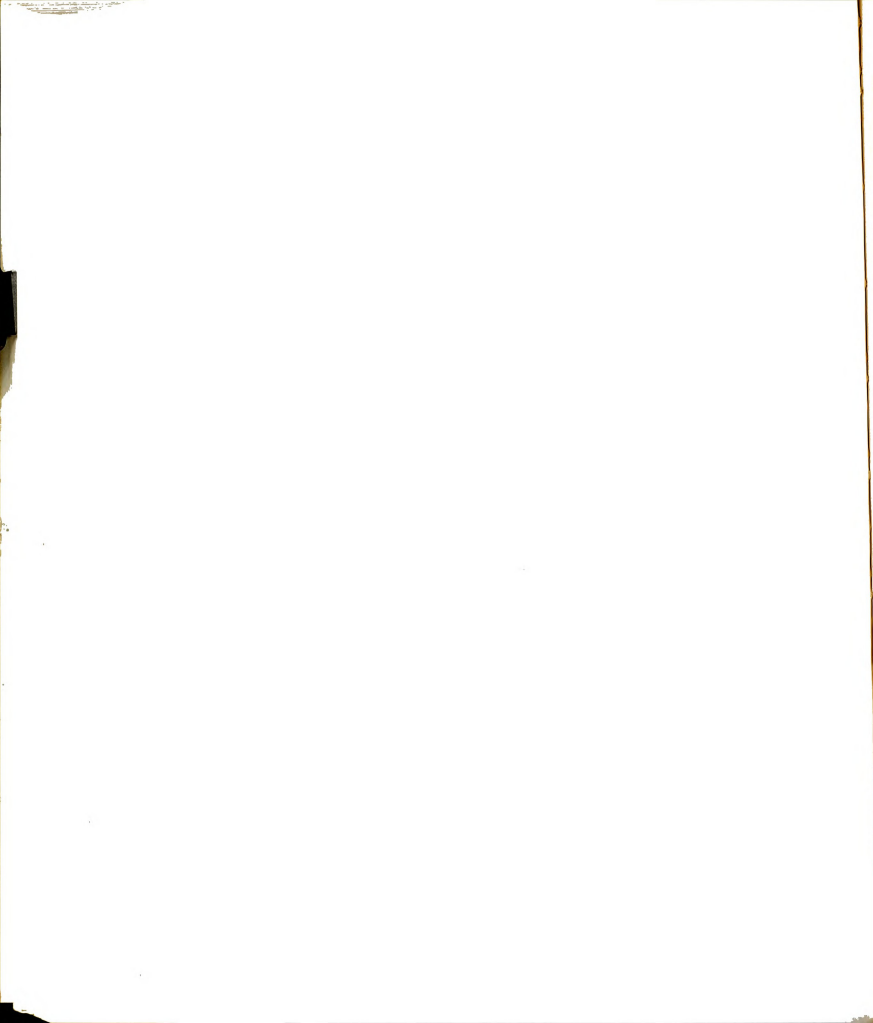
the Seven Floors is linked with Belludo, a legendary headless horse who is pursued by six dogs. Some Moorish bathing tanks remind Mateo of the tales of a hideous Moor "who used to issue forth from the door in the rock to entrap unwary bathers" (p. 238). Later the two walkers pass the ravine of the jar so named "because a jar full of Moorish gold was found here in old times" (p. 239). More legends of subterranean caves occupied by Boabdil, and an iron pot filled with Moorish gold are also briefly mentioned.

During the walk considerable attention is given to the surrounding countryside. The mountains and the setting sun are described several times and even the "deep tones of the cathedral bell" (p. 240) are mentioned. (Such frequent references to the setting help unify the selection and provide a functional link with the legends.) The "deepening twilight" encourages the walkers "to leave this haunted ground" (p. 241), but not before Irving asks about the fires of the ice gatherers in the darkening distance. The fires plus the appearance of a funeral procession prompts Mateo to relate the tale of Tio Nicolo, the longest tale contained within the framing story. The legend concerns an old ice gatherer who after falling asleep on his mule, wakes to find himself outside--not Granada--but another Moorish city. He watches as a "hobgoblin army" of Moorish soldiers marches by. At the

rear of the procession between "two black Moorish horsemen" rode the Grand Inquisitor of Granada. Tio calls to the Inquisitor but his only response is to be struck from his mule. When Tio recovers his senses, he finds himself once again outside Granada. No one believes his story though they take him more seriously later in the year when the Grand Inquisitor dies.

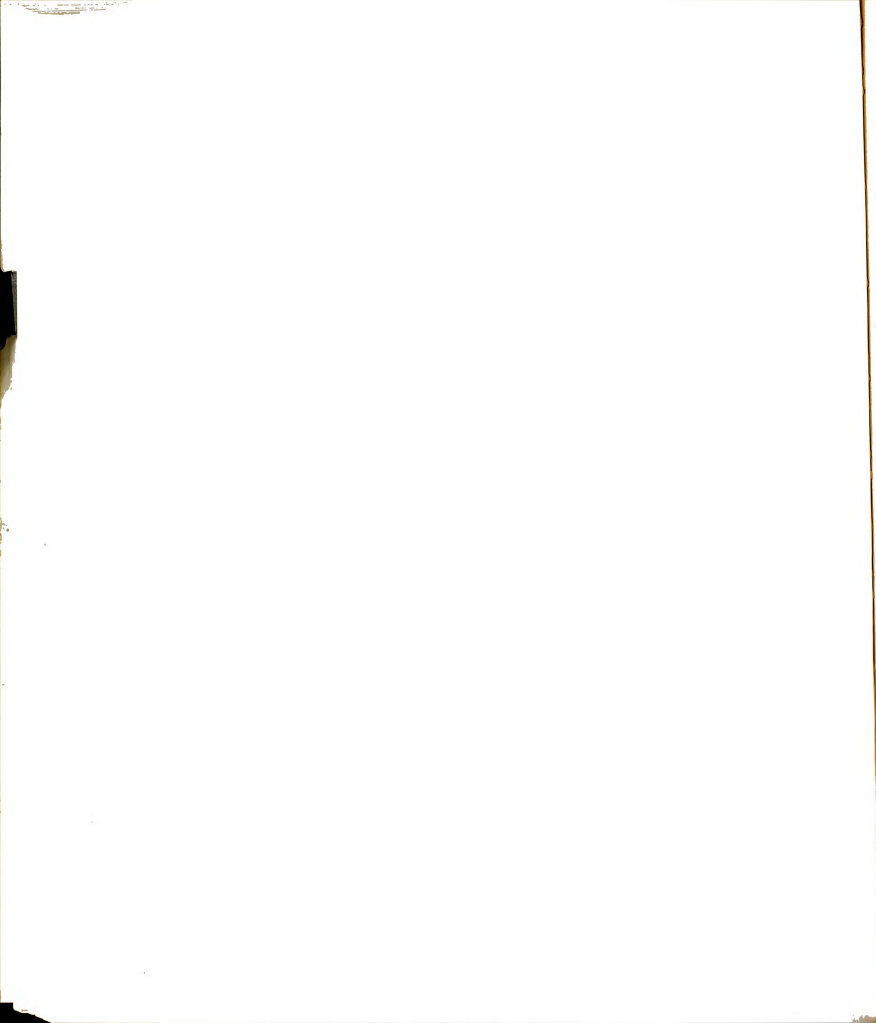
The tale ends quickly and is followed by a brief conversation between Mateo and Irving. The framing story concludes with Irving claiming historical authenticity for his legends which he says are collected and collated in the longer legend following "Ramble."

What is disappointing about "A Ramble in the Hills" is its weak structure as a framing story. Though greatest attention is given to the legend of Tio Nicolo, there is little structural or thematic reason for focusing on this particular legend. And though aspects of the setting trigger particular legends, there is little connection made between these legends. Other than demonstrating that the area is rich with legendary associations, there seems to be little purpose or point to the selection. It is only in the loosest sense then that the selection can be considered a framing story. There is an external sketch which incorporates several brief references to other tales, one a little longer than the others, which is narrated by a new person. The inner and outer sketches



are connected by the use of setting and dialogue. But these strengths are not enough to make the selection successful as a framing story. Rather, "A Ramble in the Hills" falls far short of "Strange Stories" and "Dolph Heyliger."

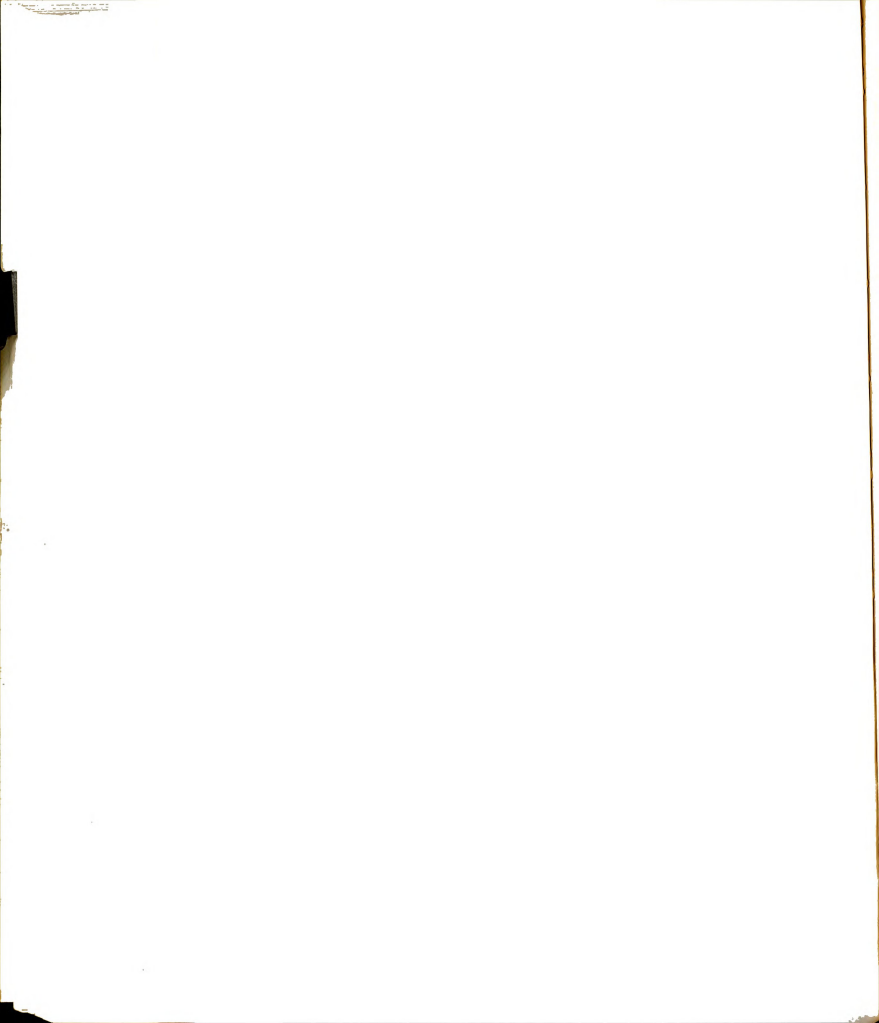
"Governor Manco and the Soldier" is the other selection from The Alhambra which might be classified as a framing story. The plot is more complicated than that of many of the selections. It begins with the appearance at the Alhambra of a strange soldier leading an Arabian horse. When he announces that he has a mysterious tale to tell, he is taken to the Governor who at the time is being attended by his housekeeper's daughter, "a demure dark-eyed damsel" (p. 330). Assured by the Governor that the handmaid "is of great secrecy and discretion, and to be trusted with any thing" (p. 331), the soldier tells his tale in her presence. The tale, which is repeatedly interrupted by comments and responses from the Governor, begins the previous evening on a plain of Old Castile which is two or three hundred miles distant from the Alhambra. The soldier relates how he met a Moorish soldier, shared his meal with him, and then the two rode off together on the Moor's horse. The horse travels as fast as lightning and soon they are in a cavern filled with Moors on the side of a mountain. In the midst of all the people is a throne occupied by Boabdil himself. The



soldier is informed that once every year on the eve of St. John "spell-bound warriors sleeping from age to age" (p. 337) are released from enchantment to pay homage to Boabdil. Sometime the warriors will be permanently released and will accompany Boabdil when he regains his throne in the Alhambra. The soldier flees the cavern on the magic horse and in the rush of the multitude which is also leaving, he is "thrown senseless to the earth" (p. 339). He awakes to find himself on the hill outside Granada. The tale ends with the soldier's advice to Manco to wall up all the caves and entrances into the mountain.

The governor calls the tale a "cock-and-bull" (p. 340) story and throws the soldier in the dungeon, first relieving him of a purse of jewels. Jail does not alter the good humor of the soldier, however; he plays his guitar, charms the damsel, and becomes popular with the common people. Eventually, the prisoner escapes. Missing also are the damsel, the purse of jewels, and the Arabian horse. Left behind is a "stout cudgel" and a note for the Governor bearing the words: "A gift to Governor Manco, from an Old Soldier" (p. 347).

One interesting aspect of this story is that Governor Manco, the central character of the framing story, is one of the central characters in the preceding selection "The Governor and the Notary" in which he is characterized as stubborn, self-centered, and determined to have his own

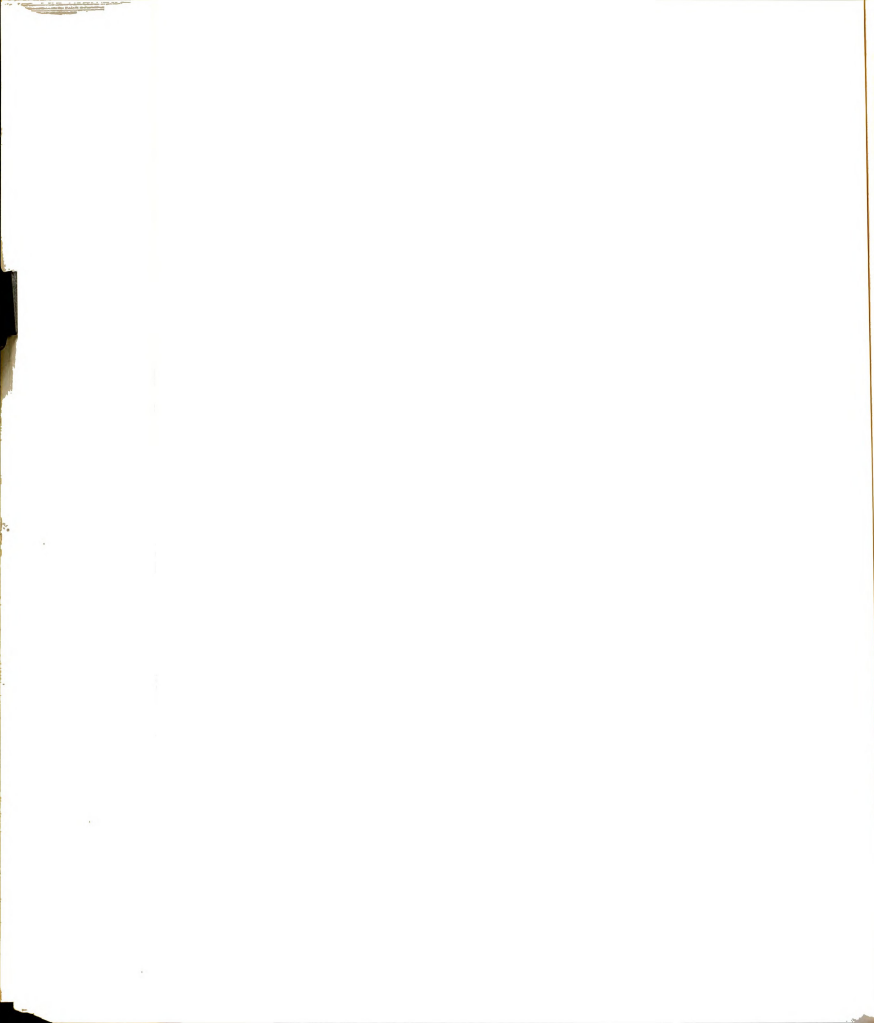


way. The reader brings this information to his reading of "The Governor and the Soldier." The governor's actions and words reinforce the initial impression and further develop the ruler as lacking in self-perception and in accurate judgement of those around him. In fact the characterization of Manco is probably the most successful aspect of the selection. Often we view him through the ironic voice of the narrator, but that irony is supported by the Governor's actions and words. Like the King in the "Legend of the Arabian Astrologer," Manco is overly confident of his own shrewdness and power, and like Aben Habuz, his overconfidence and lack of perception lead to his defeat. Rejecting the soldier's tale as hogwash, Manco assumes that he is the soldier's mental superior. Manco's physical and political superiority is enforced when he throws the soldier in prison. So confident is the governor, in fact, that he completely trusts the housekeeper's daughter; so imperceptive is he, that he is assured that she worships him. Ironically enough, the soldier outwits the governor on all three counts.

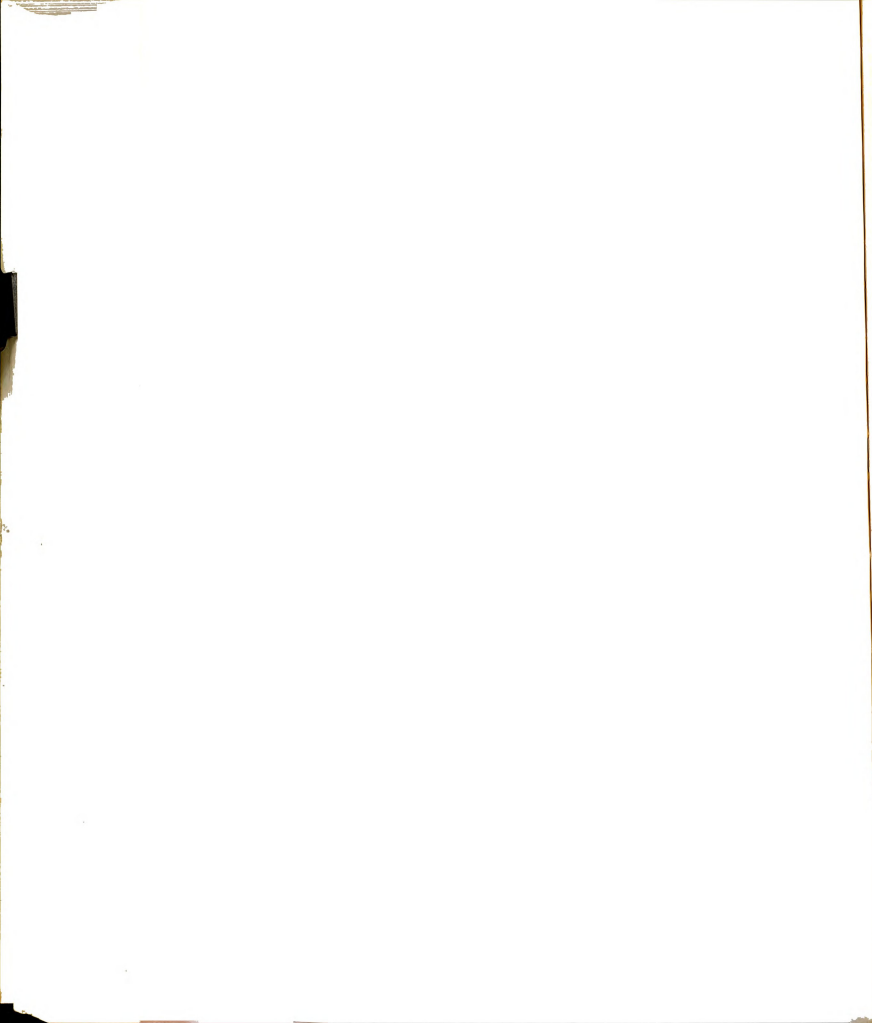
Another effective technique used in the selection is the dialogue, particularly in the opening scenes which provide the selection with dramatic realism. The selection begins with a conversation between the strange soldier and the "testy old Corporal" (p. 328) who first encounters him. This is followed by the longer discussion between

the soldier and Manco during which the inner tale is introduced. The frequent interruptions by the governor also help provide a dramatic integration of the two narratives.

Yet, despite these successful aspects of the story, the reader who has read Irving at his structural best in "Dolph" or "Strange Stories," is bound to be disappointed by the inferior structure of the framing stories in The Alhambra. These selections are neither structurally nor thematically well-integrated with the center tales. Instead it usually appears that Irving simply tried to string together some legends with a semblance of order. It is almost as if, after the strongly negative critical reaction to Tales of a Traveller, Irving abandoned any pretense of shaping the structure of his selections. Rather he simply relates a plot, a sketch of surroundings, or a legend. His intent seems to be once again to relay a mood or atmosphere, and to avoid any concentrated effort to reshape the material into a well-unified story. Thus, in "A Ramble Among the Hills" or "The Governor and the Soldier" Irving relies on a loose, almost flimsy structure to incorporate more than one legend. There is little attempt to skillfully weave one legend with another to form a new unified whole. In the story of Manco, even the strength of characterization is not consistent, for



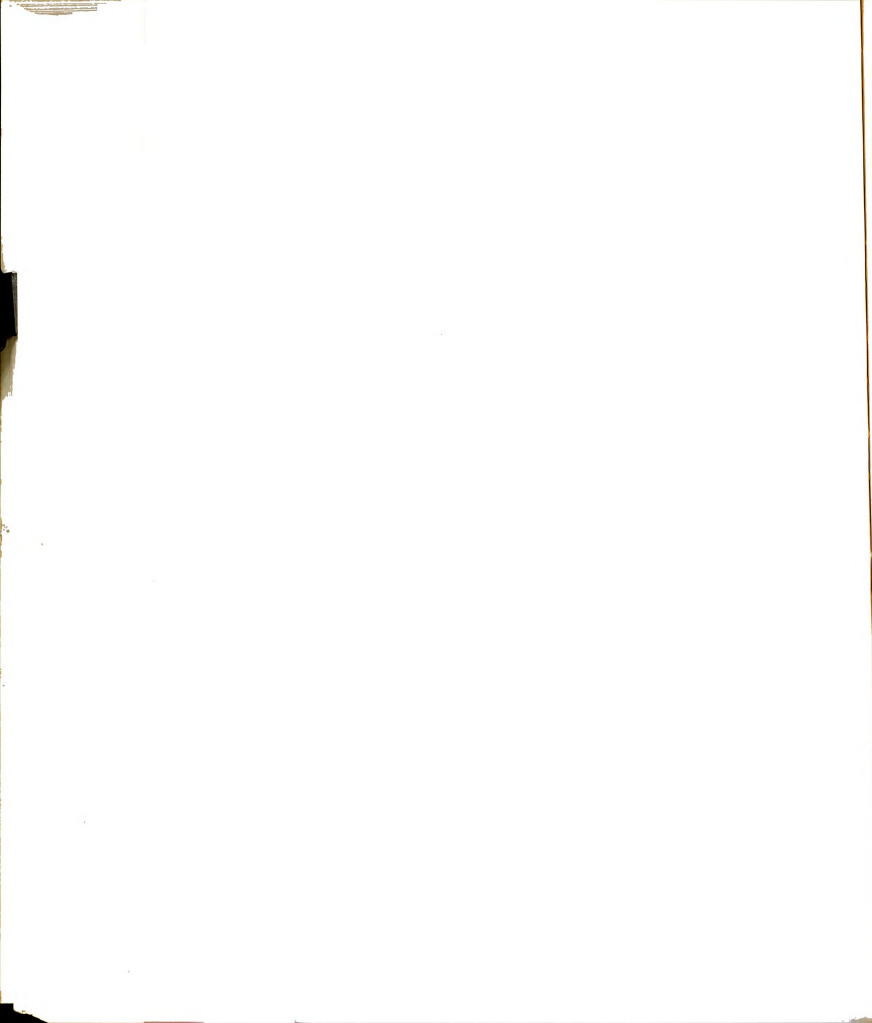
while the governor is adequately characterized, the plausibility and motivation of the soldier is weak. There is little apparent reason for the soldier to come to the Alhambra, or try to hoodwink the governor; nor is there adequate indication that the soldier is, in fact, after the damsel or had planned all along to win her aid and attention. In fact, the conflict between the soldier and the governor is not adequately motivated or developed. Too often in these last framing stories, as in most of the selections in The Alhambra, plausibility and realism are sacrificed--not for mood or effect--but simply for the purpose of telling another legend.



CONCLUSION

With the publication of The Alhambra in 1832, Irving ended both his long European sojourn and his major efforts as a writer of short fiction. Later in 1835 he published The Crayon Miscellany which includes "Newstead Abbey," a short collection of tales and sketches. In 1855 he published Wolfert's Roost, a collection of short selections which had been written before 1824. (Neither of these collections adds significantly to our understanding of Irving's short fiction.) Most of his publications after 1832 were longer, more historical, non-fiction works including Astoria, Adventures of Captain Bonneville, Life of Oliver Goldsmith, Mahomet and His Successors, and the five volume Life of Washington which he finished in 1859, the year of his death.

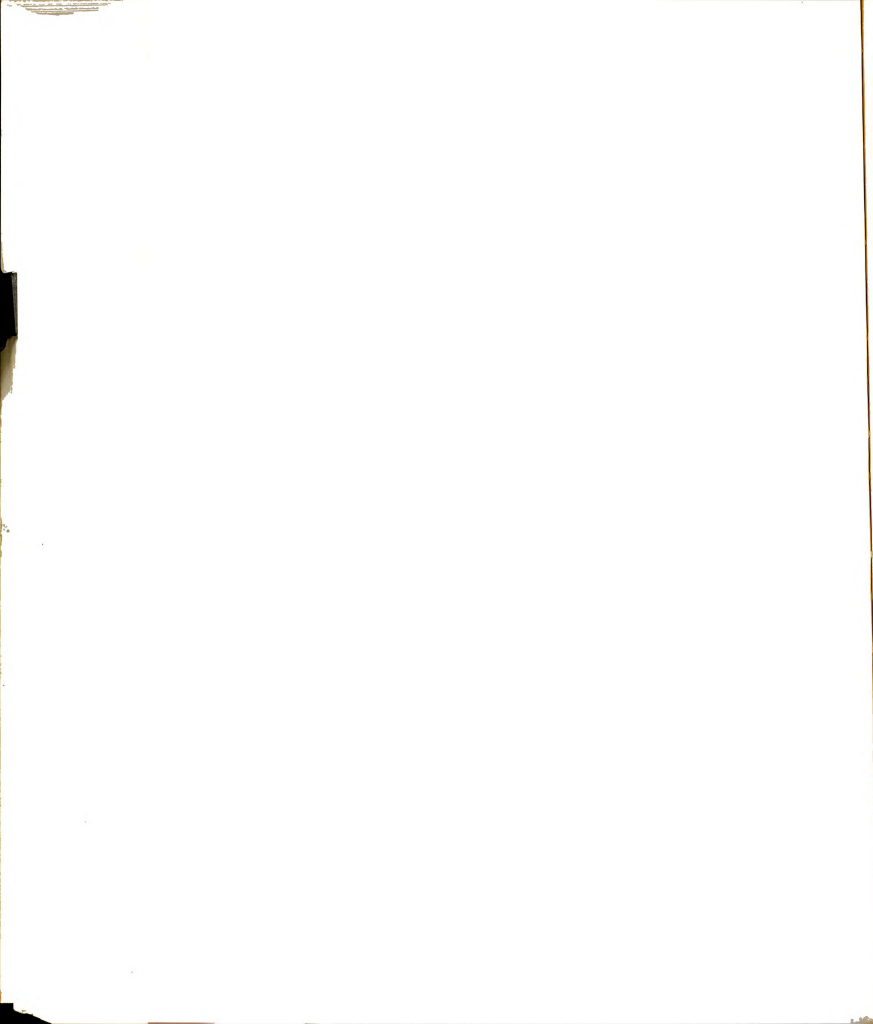
His turn to longer, non-fiction works does not come as a surprise to the careful reader of his shorter works. Scattered throughout the four volumes discussed in this dissertation are Irving's apologies for the lightness, simplicity, and briefness of various



selections. As if to compensate, Irving frequently makes claims--half in jest, half in earnest--for the authenticity of his stories or tales. And when information can be historically validated, he takes great pains to do so in footnotes, postscripts, and introductions. He seemed to be haunted by a desire to produce what he considered a "serious" work.

It is, however, probably not simply this desire which alters his previous course of writing collections of short works. The negative critical reaction to Tales of a Traveller greatly upset Irving. Not only did Bracebridge Hall and Tales of a Traveller fail to match the popularity of The Sketch Book, but the careful structure of Tales was overlooked or misread by the critics. His skill in organizing short works to form a larger, unified whole went largely unnoticed. Instead, he was criticized for lack of originality and lack of propriety in his choice of subject matter.

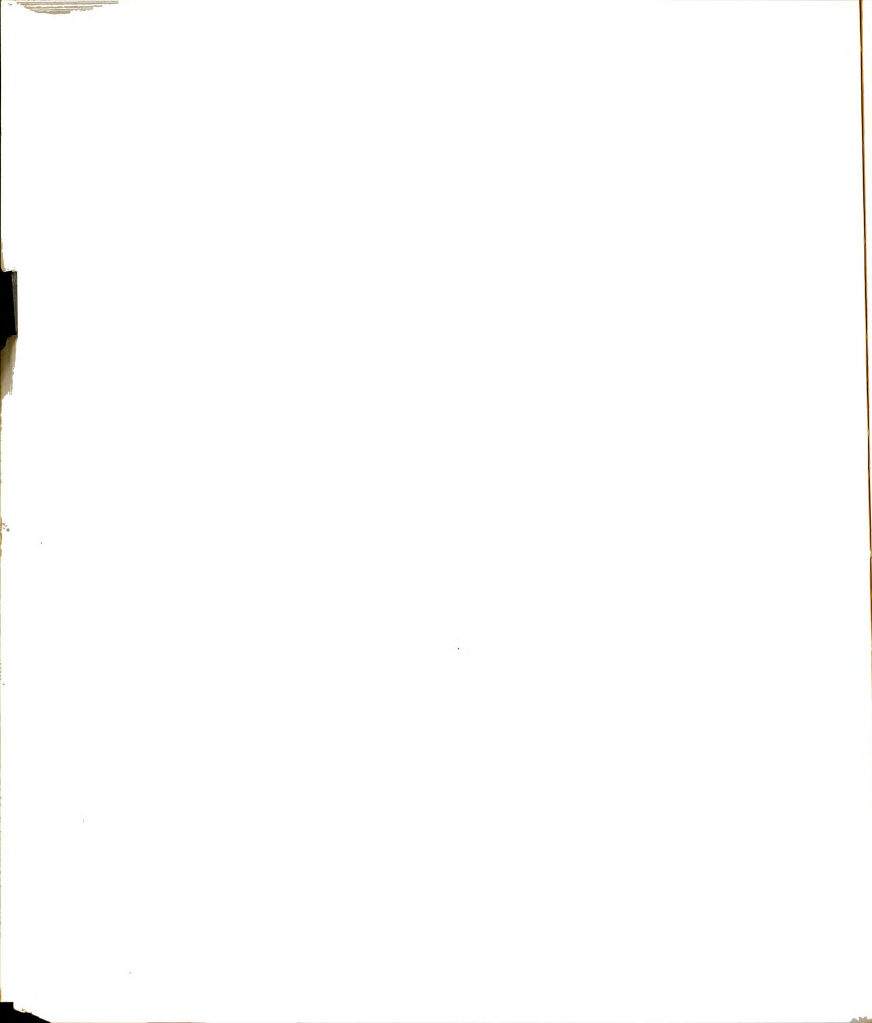
It is no wonder that he saw little hope in the further production of short selections. In 1826 he began the Life of Columbus which was published in 1828 followed in 1829 with the publication of The Conquest of Granada. His stay at the Alhambra in 1829 so enchanted him, however, that he was unable to resist one more try at working with legends and tales. This time, though, he devoted only a minimal effort to structure and design. His



primary purpose was simply to retell the legends and recapture the magical atmosphere of Granada's past. He dropped the use of a pseudonym and did little to develop either character or conflict in the selections. Instead of thematically or formally structuring the selections, Irving, in The Alhambra, usually just tacks one tale on to the next in the loosest fashion.

The modern reader often finds The Alhambra tedious reading. Irving is able to capture the magic atmosphere of the region, but atmosphere alone is not sufficient to sustain a reader's interest through such a long collection. Yet, ironically enough, Irving's contemporaries warmly received the book. Having thus placated his critics, Irving could end his endeavors in short fiction with a sense of satisfaction.

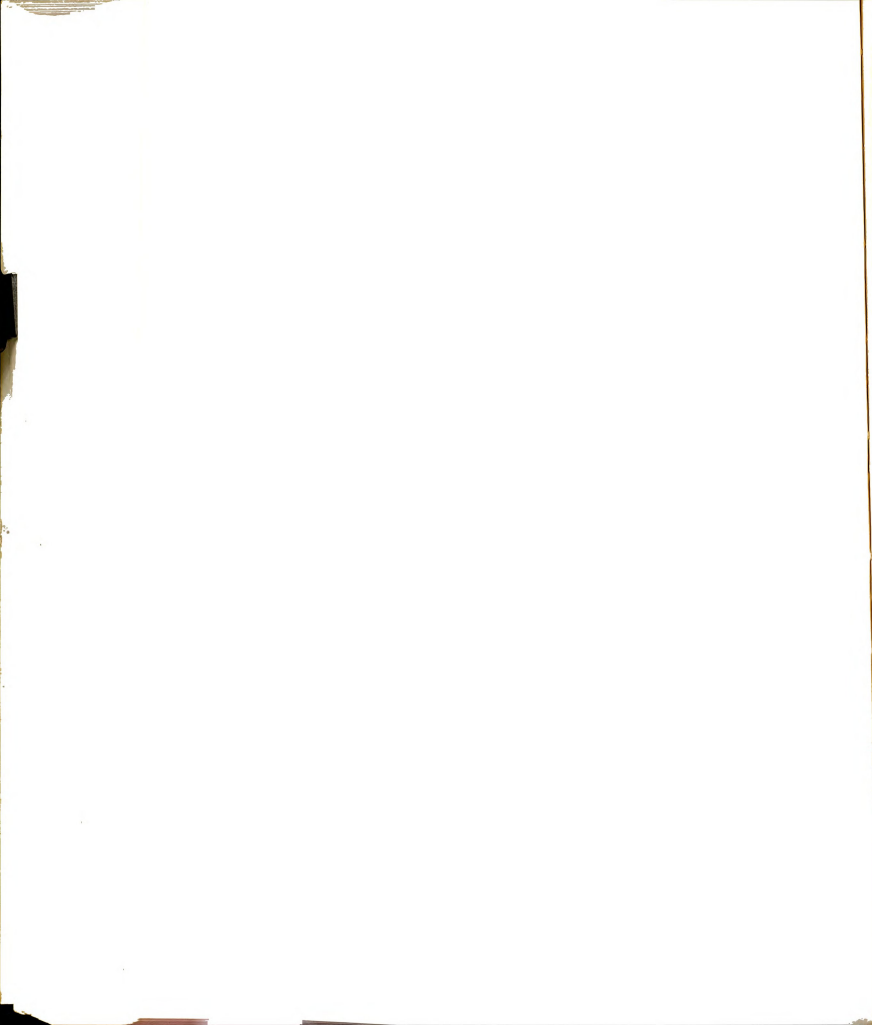
Anyone who reads the volumes discussed in this dissertation will be struck first, by the differences in the quality of the selections, and second, by the fact that those differences do not closely correspond either to the chronological production of the works or the development of the writer's abilities. Each volume contains some of Irving's best and some of his worst work. Despite this variety, however, it is possible to discern in the first three volumes Irving's increasing concern with the narrative point of view and the structure. The divided focus between the narrator and the subject matter



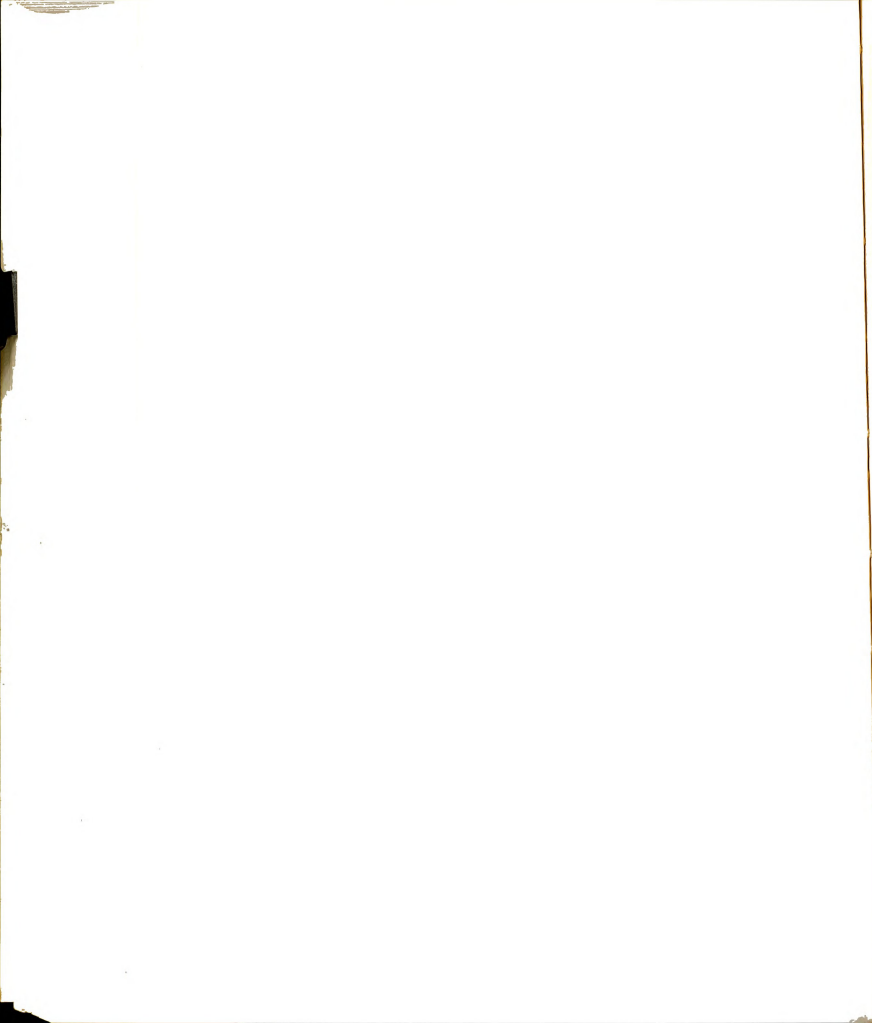
in early sketches, such as, "The Wife," becomes even more evident, but also more controlled, in "The Stout Gentleman." The difficulties which arise from such a division, however, are resolved in "Dolph Heyliger," which ends Irving's second collection. Here, by removing the narrator's presence via a series of frame stories, Irving avoids the difficulties of a divided focus. Finally, in Tales of a Traveller Irving was able not only to unify the focus of individual selections, but also to organize several selections into a unified whole which functionally integrated the narrator.

Of most interest to the modern reader, perhaps, is not Irving's development as a writer, but the variety of forms and techniques he employed, albeit sporadically. This dissertation has imposed an order on these writings for the purpose of examining them. It is clear that, scattered throughout Irving's short fiction, are the makings of the American short story. Setting, characterization, conflict, tension, tone, point of view, theme--all the elements that he only sometimes was able to successfully integrate into a short story--are separately emphasized in one selection or another, and are handled competently enough to point the way for other writers.

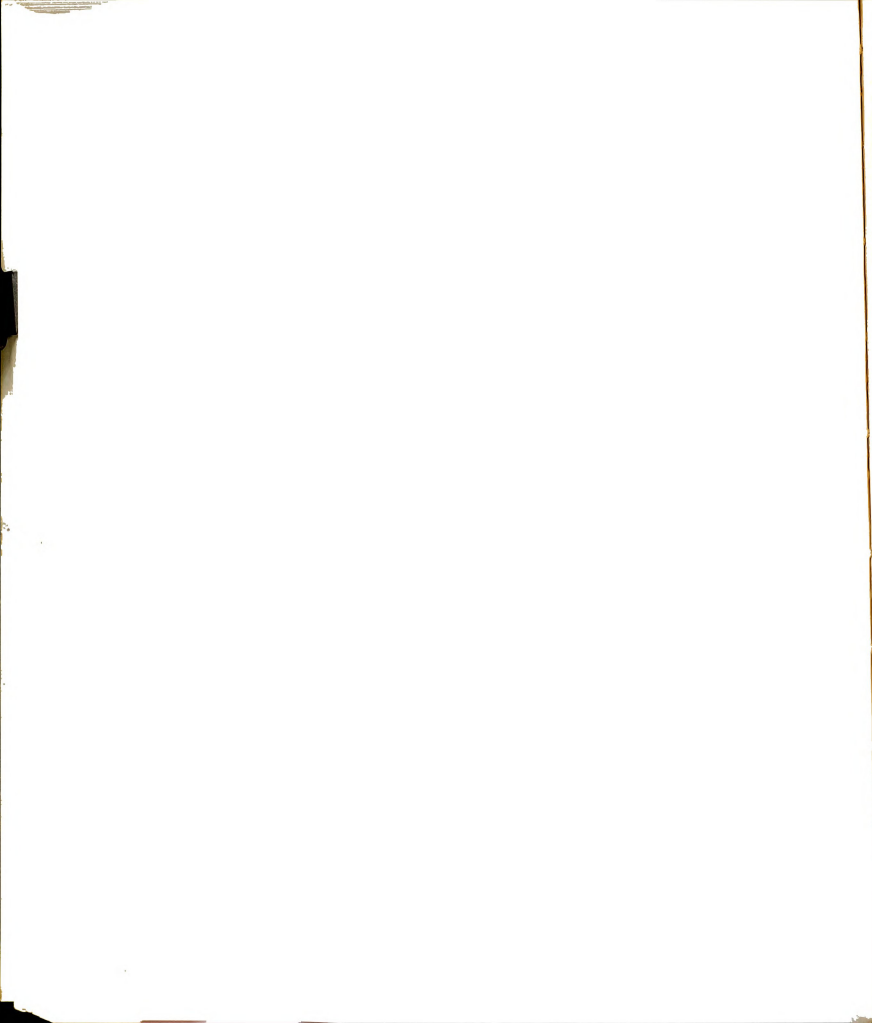
As is usually the case with dissertations, this examination is just a beginning. There are several kinds



of studies which might follow. Perhaps the most fruitful path would be to ascertain how Irving's writings specifically influenced the major American writers who immediately followed him--Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and others. Or perhaps it would be possible to trace the structural devices employed in American short fiction since Irving. Even more specifically, one could examine the development of the first-person narrator in American short fiction. Certainly there is still much to be learned about the genesis and development of the American short story.



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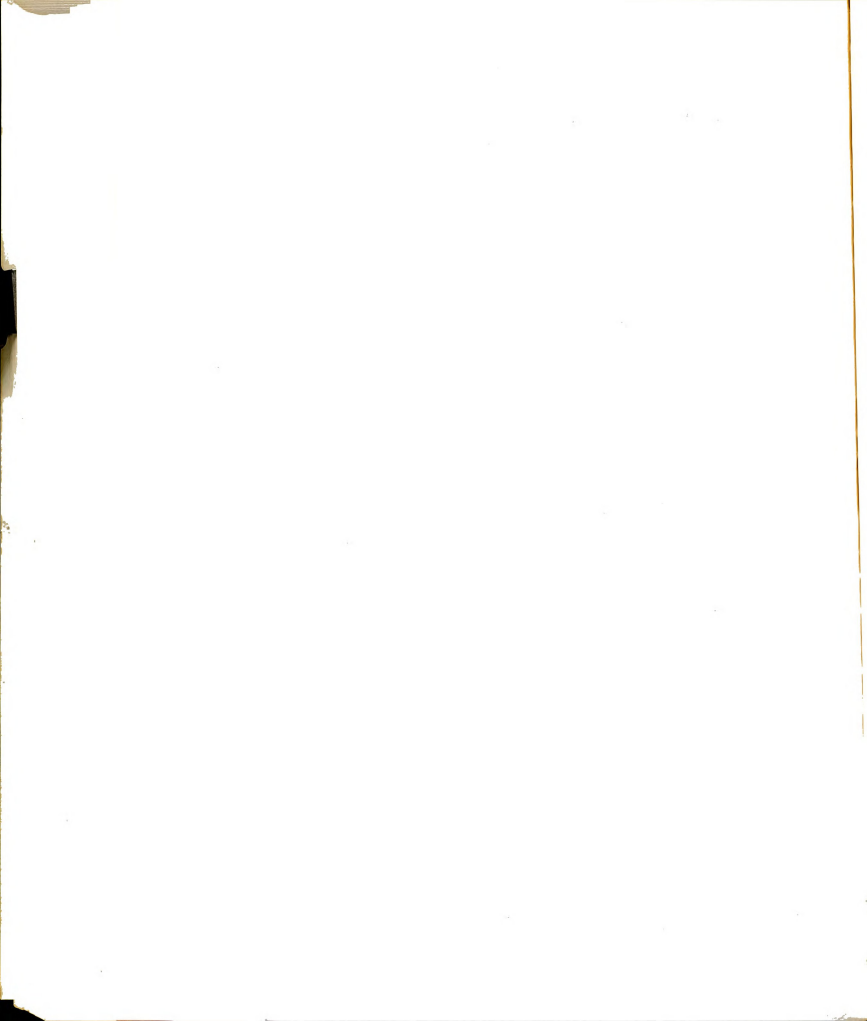
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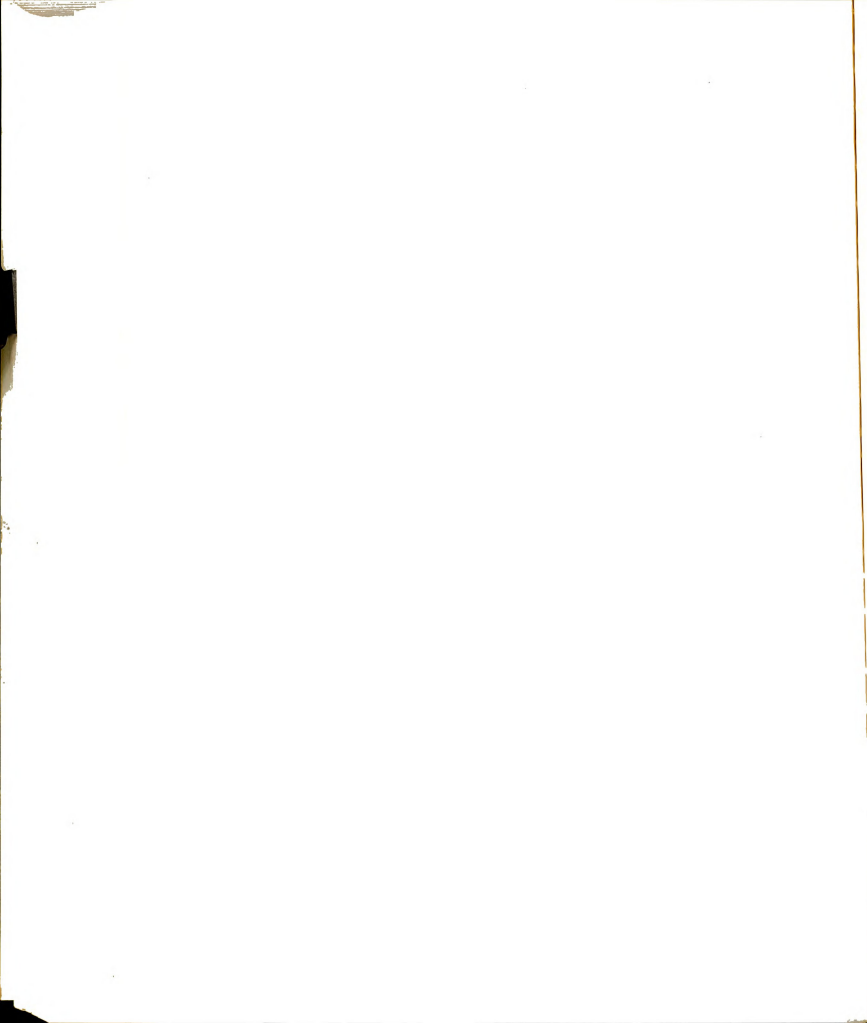
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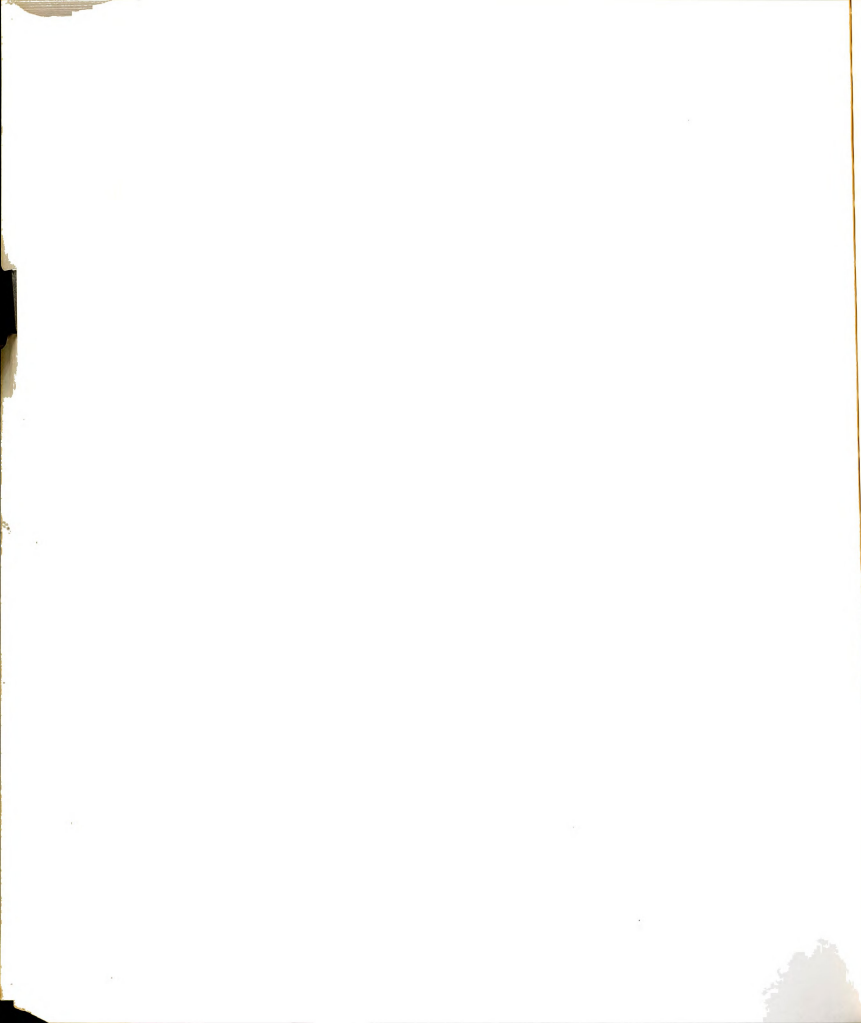
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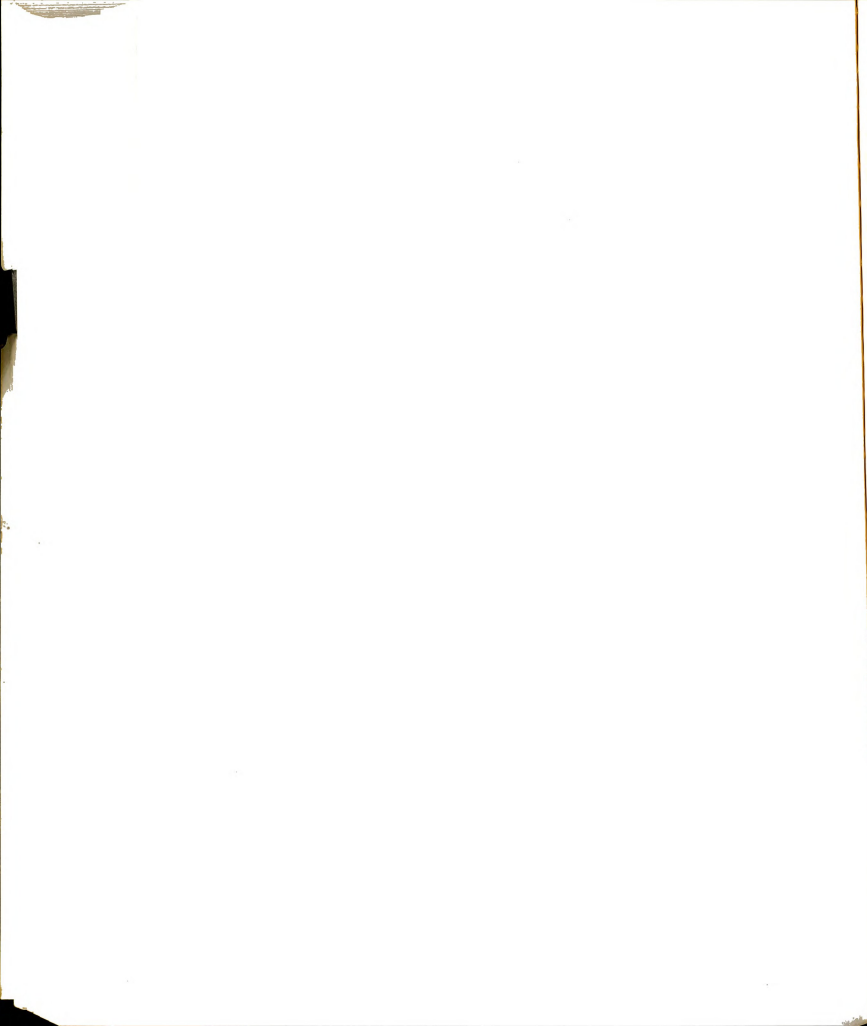
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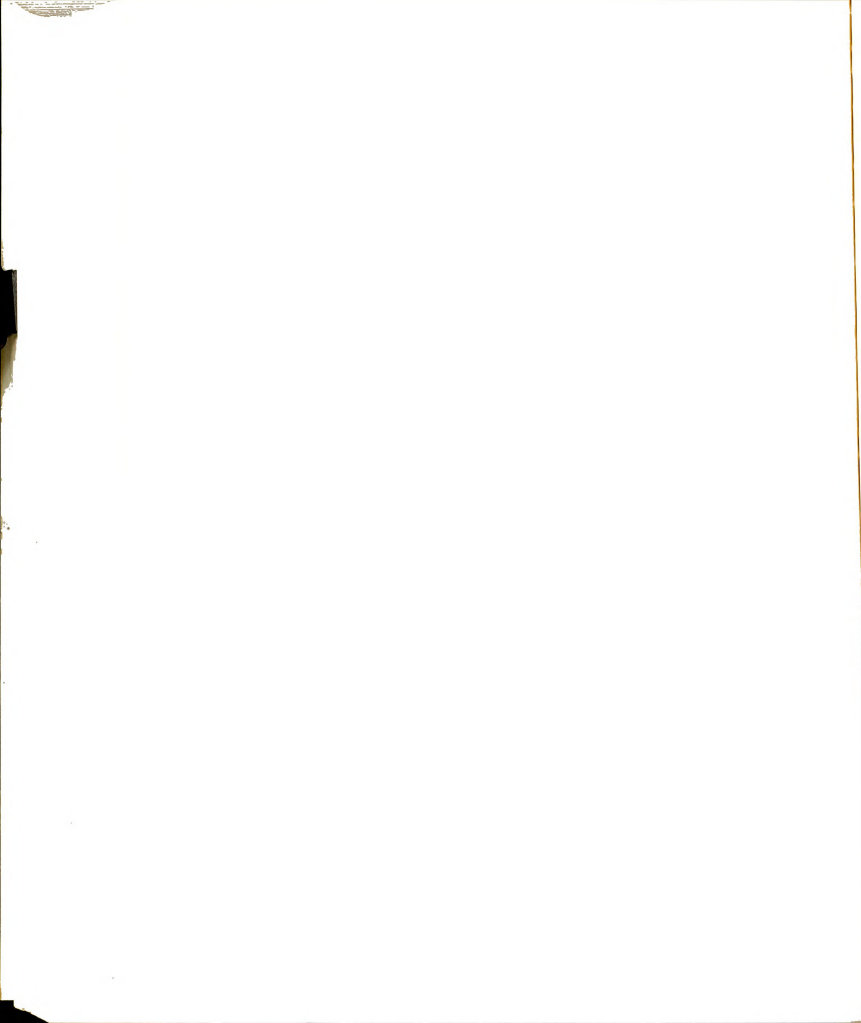
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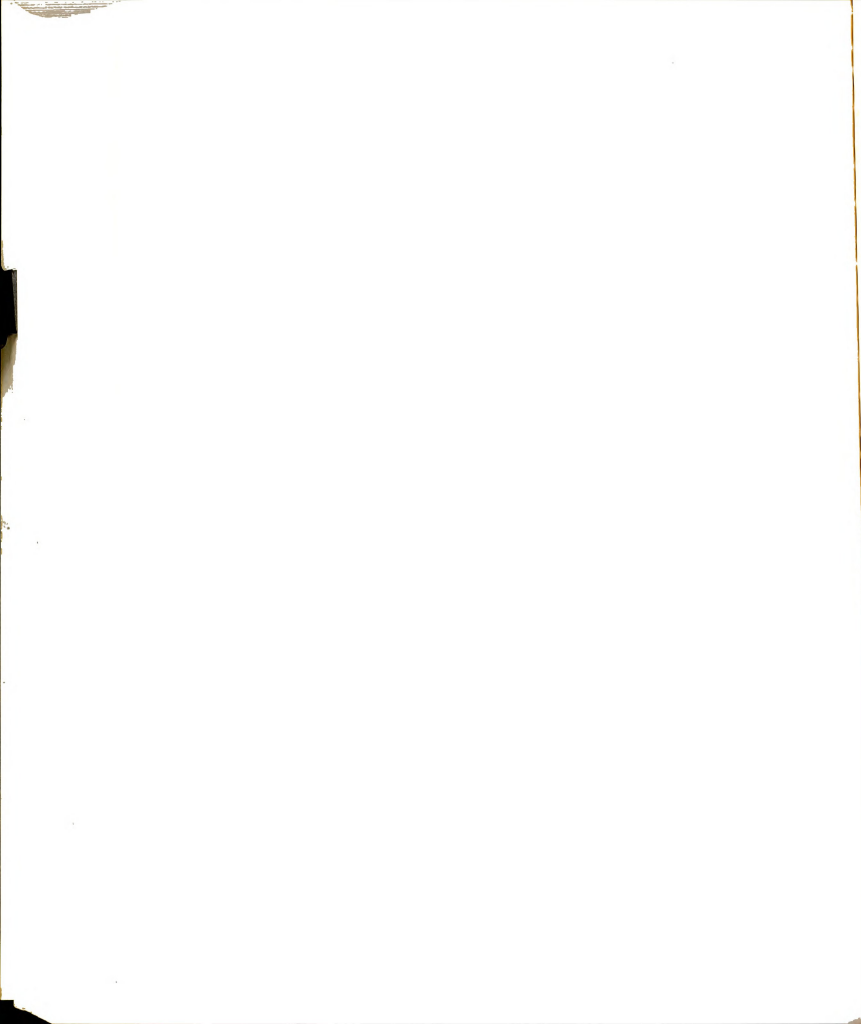
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APPENDIX



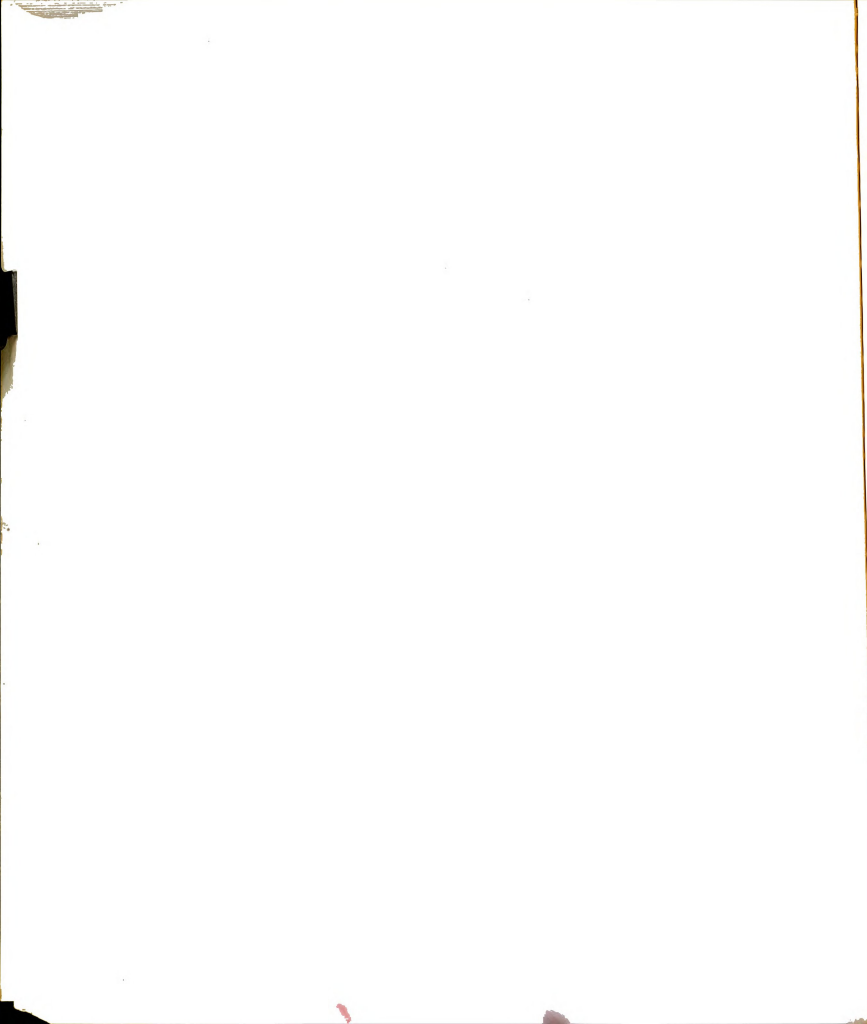
APPENDIX

A. "The Balcony" (The Alhambra)

"The Balcony" emphasizes Irving's delight in watching others. He refers to the balcony which is on the Hall of Ambassadors as an observatory where we "used often to take [his] seat, and consider not merely the heaven above but the earth beneath" (p. 117). What he sees is "a moving picture of Spanish life and character, which [he] delighted to study." His role is further emphasized when he compares himself to an astronomer, acknowledging that he too had a pocket size telescope which he used to aid his vision.

I was thus, in a manner, an invisible observer, and, without quitting my solitude, could throw myself in an instant into the midst of society--a rare advantage to one of somewhat shy and quiet habits, and fond, like myself, of observing the drama of life without becoming an actor in the scene. (p. 118)

Not only does he openly admit his preference to remain a detached observer but he also confesses that rather than learning factual history or listening to Mateo's gossip, he prefers to create his own imaginative stories about the people.



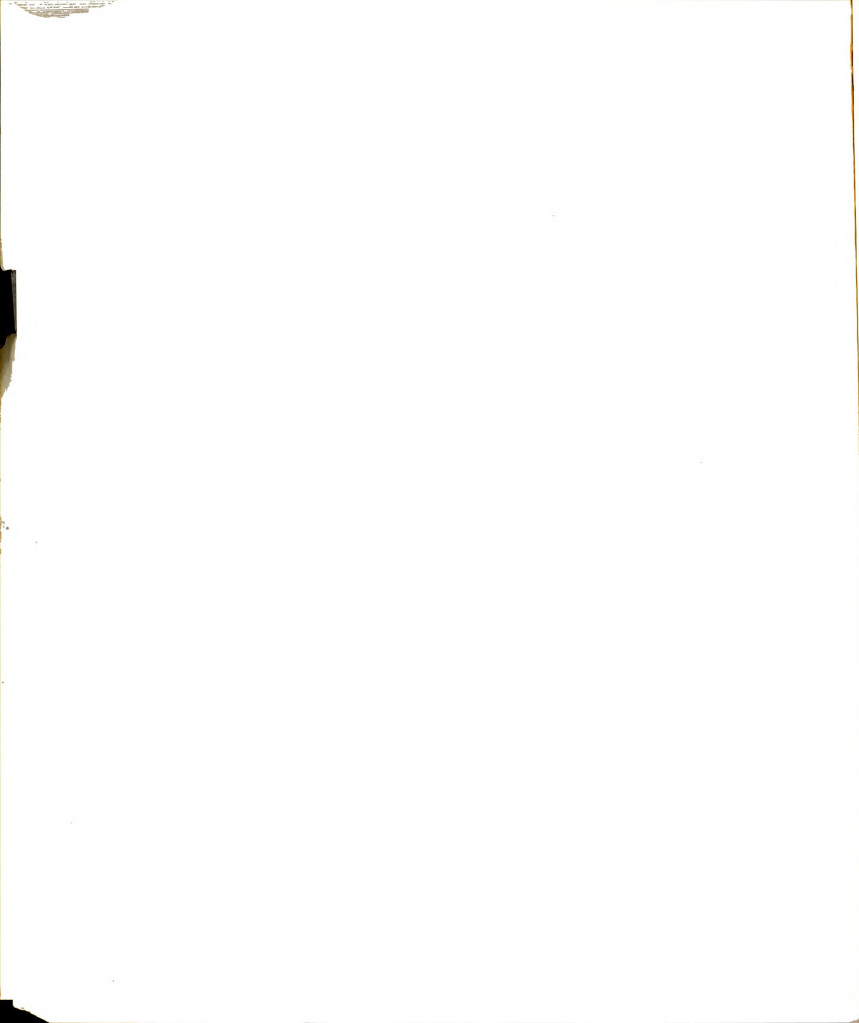
I preferred, however, to form conjectural histories for myself, and thus would sit for hours, weaving, from casual incidents and indications passing under my eye, a whole tissue of schemes, intrigues, and occupations of the busy mortals below. There was scarce a pretty face or a striking figure that I daily saw, about which I had not thus gradually framed a dramatic story, though some of my characters would occasionally act in direct opposition to the part assigned them, and disconcert the whole drama. (pp. 118-19)

B. "The Generalife" (The Alhambra)

Crayon's preoccupation with imagination and his detached observation as narrator are again underscored in the sketch "The Generalife" which acts as a short two-page introduction to a longer legend. High in the towers of the Generalife, a legendary palace, Irving once again watches the life beneath him.

Here I had an opportunity of witnessing those scenes which painters are fond of depicting about southern palaces and gardens. It was the saint's day of the count's daughter, and she had brought up several of her youthful companions from Granada, to sport away a long summer's day among the breezy halls and bowers of the Moorish palaces. (p. 201)

Later, sitting in an "open gallery or colonnade commanding a vast prospect," Irving describes the scene before him as a "dreamy world, all glimmering to the eye in summer sunshine" (p. 201). The sights, sounds, and the weather all have "a witching effect upon the mind," which of course, establishes the atmosphere for the legend which follows.



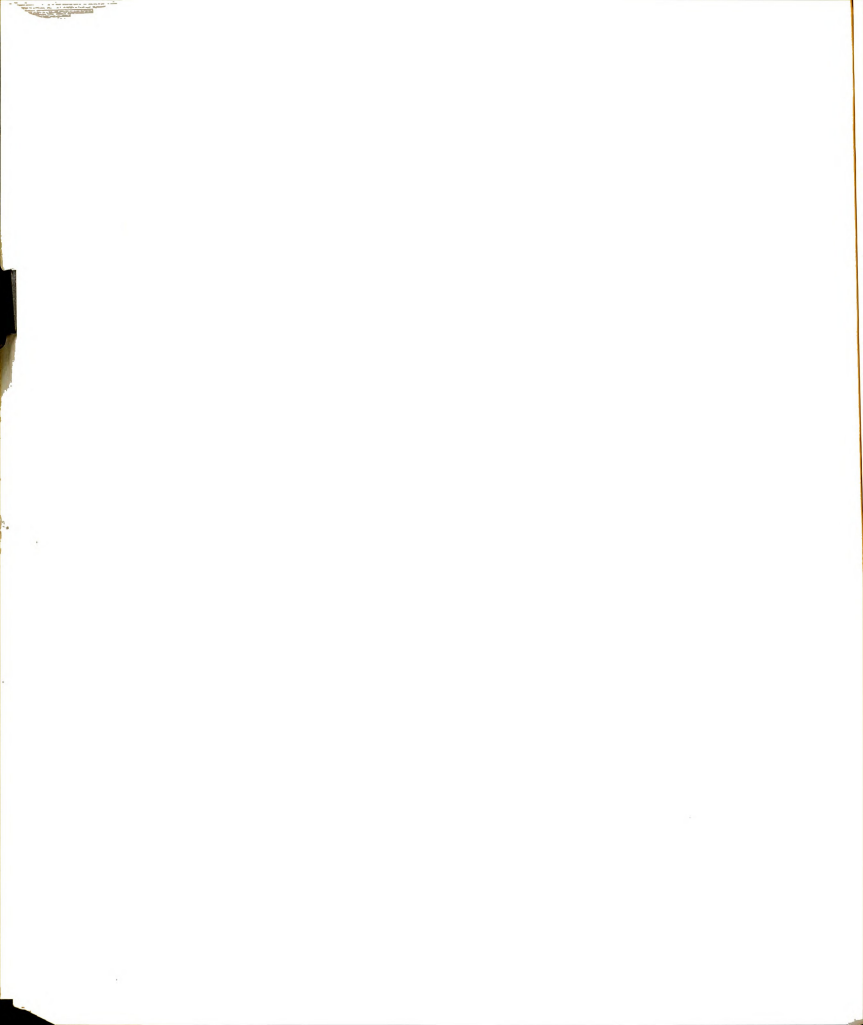
C. "Love Symptoms" (Bracebridge Hall)

"Love Symptoms" picks up a secondary love theme of Bracebridge Hall, the relationship between Lady Lillycraft and the general. Once again Crayon as observer is more inactive than what he observes. Prompted by Master Simon's comments, Crayon describes what he has seen between Lady Lillycraft and the general.

I have, indeed, noticed a growing attention and courtesy in the veteran towards her ladyship; he softens very much in her company, sits by her at table, and entertains her with long stories about Seringapatam, and pleasant anecdotes of the Mulligatawney club. (p. 109)

Crayon refers to himself five times in the first two paragraphs. The entire sketch is composed of four or five examples of the behavior of the couple, each incident observed by Crayon. Each, he feels, demonstrates the affection between the couple. In the incident which ends the sketch, Crayon is a passive participant but an active observer.

There is still another circumstance which inclines me to give very considerable credit to Master Simon's suspicions. Lady Lillycraft is very fond of quoting poetry, and the conversation often turns upon it, on which occasions the general is thrown completely out. It happened the other day that Spenser's Fairy Queen was the theme for the great part of the morning, and the poor gentleman sat perfectly silent. I found him not long after in the library, with spectacles on his nose, a book in his hand, and fast asleep. On my approach he awoke, slipped the spectacles into his pocket, and began to read very attentively. After a little while he put a paper in the place, and laid the volume aside, which I perceived was the Fairy Queen. I have had the curiosity to watch how he got



on in his poetical studies; but, though I have repeatedly seen him with the book in his hand yet I find the paper has not advanced above three or four pages; the general being extremely apt to fall asleep when he reads. (p. 111)

D. "Lovers' Troubles" (Bracebridge Hall)

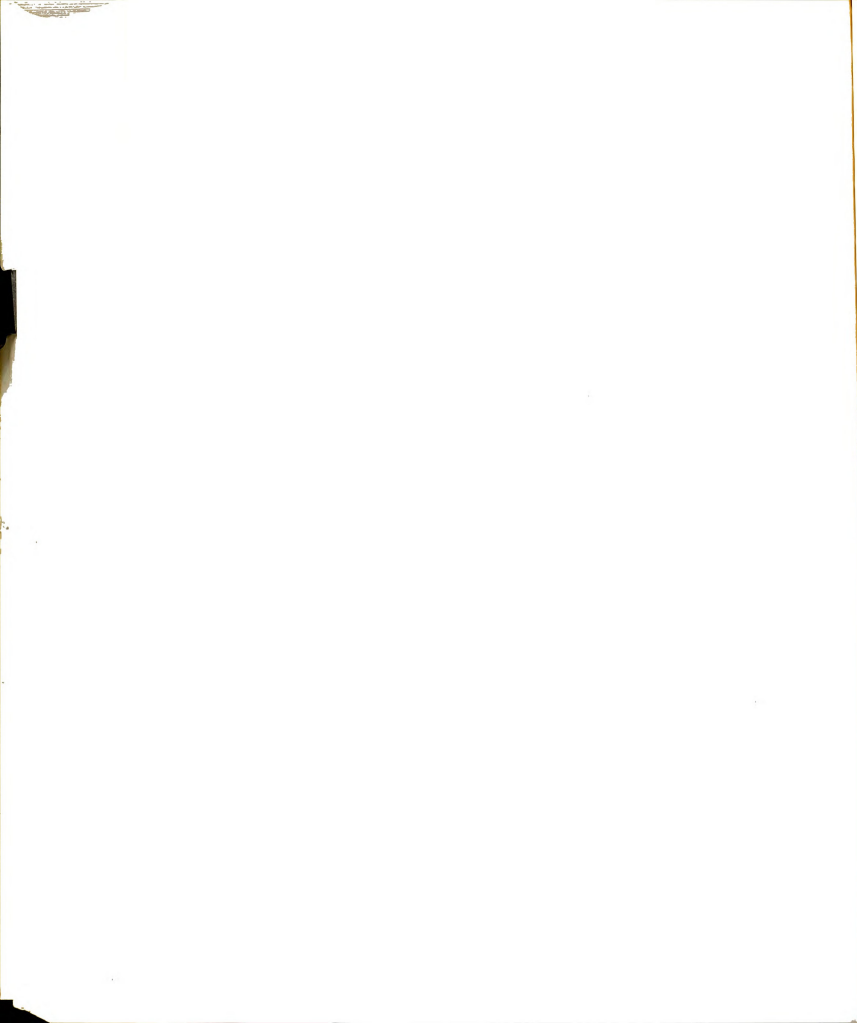
"Lovers' Troubles" (p. 360) deals with the unrequited love of Phoebe Wilkins. After some introductory remarks about the preparations for Julia's wedding, Crayon explains his interest in Phoebe's circumstances.

The season has been equally unpropitious to the lovelorn Phoebe Wilkins. I fear the reader will be impatient at having this humble amour so often alluded to; but I confess I am apt to take a great interest in the love troubles of simple girls of this class. Few people have an idea of the world of care and perplexity these poor damsels have in managing the affairs of the heart. (p. 362)

He continues to draw comparisons between the rich and poor, all of which tell us more about Crayon than about any of the amorous relationships at Bracebridge Hall. He uses the plight of Phoebe as an opportunity to demonstrate his own imaginative sensitivity to the lot of the poor.

How many crosses and trials is she exposed to from some lynx-eyed dame, or staid old vestal of a mistress, who keeps a dragon watch over her virtue, and scouts the lover from the door. . . . (p. 323)

Poor baggage! after all her crosses and difficulties, when she marries, what is it but to exchange a life of comparative ease and comfort, for one of toil and uncertainty? Perhaps, too, the lover for whom in the fondness of her nature she has committed herself to fortune's freaks, turns out a worthless churl, the dissolute, hardhearted husband of low life; who, taking to the ale-house, leaves her to a cheerless home, to labor, penury, and childbearing. (pp. 363-64)

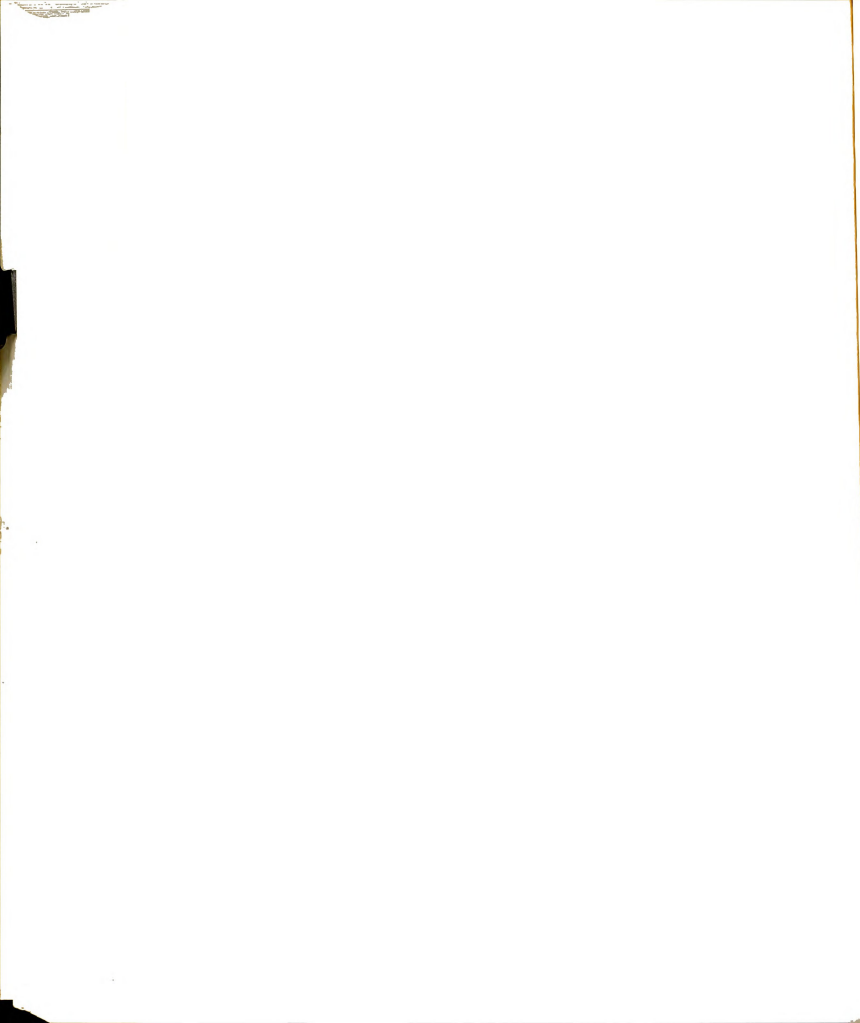


The emphasis given to these generalizations is almost strong enough to make the selection an essay rather than a sketch. In the final paragraph, however, Crayon again refers to an incident when he has observed Phoebe in the church-yard with the schoolmaster, and once again he becomes not merely the philosophizer, but the observer. The external events are still of considerable importance in the selection. We are reminded of his physical surroundings, his own presence and are not simply drowned in his abstractions about life.

E. "The Lovers" (Bracebridge Hall)

"The Lovers" ostensibly is a description of the conduct of Julia and the captain. Information about the lovers and about Julia comprises the subject matter of the sketch, but Crayon's observations--how he gathers this information--is really perhaps more important than the information itself. Crayon watches the young lovers closely. After noting that Julia has "all the delightful, blushing consciousness of an artless girl, inexperienced in coquetry, who has made her first conquest" (p. 38), Crayon describes his personal observation of the couple.

I observed them yesterday in the garden, advancing along one of the retired walks. The sun was shining with delicious warmth, making great masses of bright verdure, and deep blue shade. The cuckoo, that "harbinger of spring," was faintly heard from a distance; the thrush piped from the hawthorn; and the yellow butterflies sported, and toyed, and coquetted in the air. (pp. 38-39)



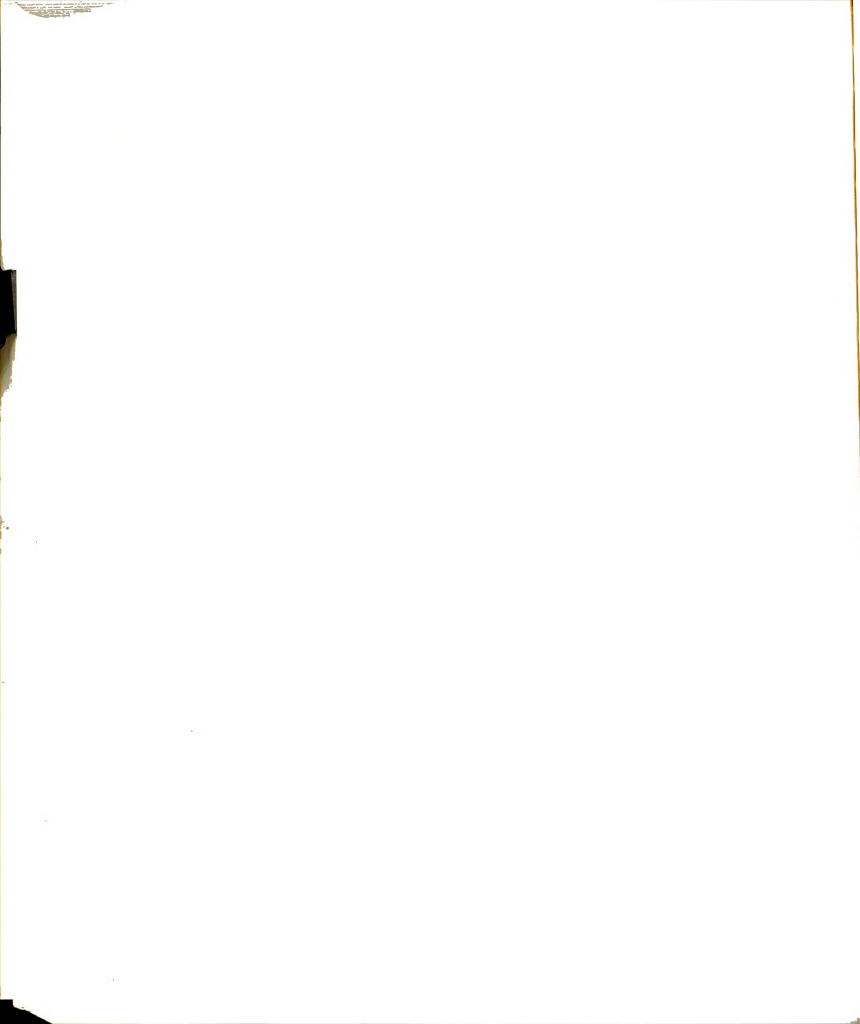
This is not merely a description of the couple for we are also aware of Crayon's presence in the scene, or perhaps it is more accurate to say on the edge of the scene.

Crayon the observer is, of course, almost always accompanied by Crayon the philosopher.

The fair Julia was leaning on her lover's arm, listening to his conversation, with her eyes cast down, a soft blush on her cheek, and a quiet smile on her lips, while in the hand that hung negligently by her side was a bunch of flowers. In this way they were sauntering slowly along; and when I considered them, and the scene in which they were moving, I could not but think it a thousand pities that the season should ever change, or that young people should ever grow older, or that blossoms should give way to fruit, or that lovers should ever get married.
(p. 39)

The philosophy itself, of course, has echoes of "Westminster Abbey" and is a familiar theme in Irving's work. The scene he paints is not unlike the description of the couple in "The Wife"--both are kinds of static portraits. But what is most striking is that the couple really is not the central topic in the scene. Crayon is the dominant character and his presence is perhaps more strongly felt than is the couple's.

It is not unusual for Crayon's observations to lead him to theoretical conclusions which tend to shift the focus and emphasis from the external world to the narrator himself.



F. "May Day" (Bracebridge Hall)

Crayon involves us more directly in the activities of "May Day" than in "Hawking." He says he "repaired to the village at an early hour to enjoy the merrymaking" (p. 293). Though he does not directly participate himself, he does enjoy wandering among the crowd drawing our attention to the behavior of various individuals. The sketch is almost a catalog of activities and persons who engage in them. And once again the scenes which have considerable action in them are painted by Crayon rather than dramatized.

His opening description of the celebration is a kind of painted scene. As he approaches the village, he sees some dancers.

A band of morris-dancers were capering on the green in their fantastic dresses, jingling with hawks' bells, with a boy dressed up as Maid Marian, and the attendant fool rattling his box to collect contributions from the bystanders. The gipsy-women too were already plying their mystery in by-corners of the village, reading the hands of the simple country girls, and no doubt promising them all good husbands and tribes of children. (p. 293)

He goes on to take note of several characters as they make their appearances at the fair. The Squire, the parson, Jack Tibbets, Master Simon and later Julia, Lady Lillycraft, Christy, and Phoebe all get their share of attention. And a few specific incidents of action are scattered among these character introductions.



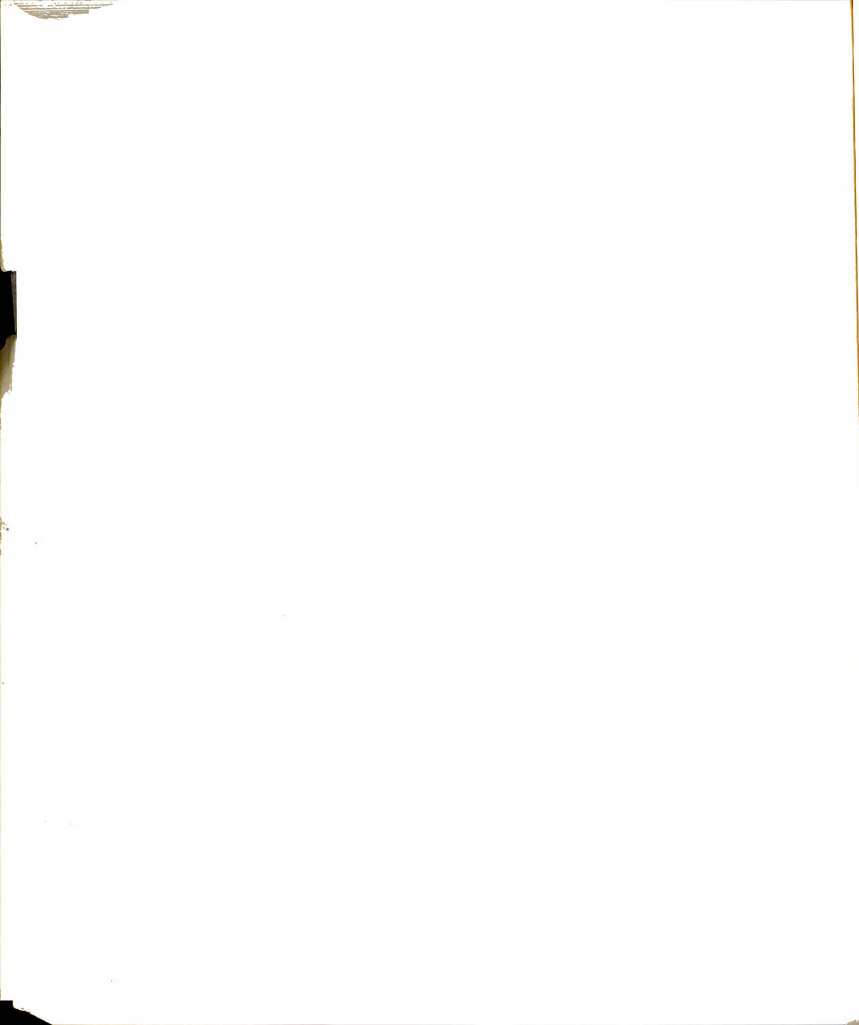
At one point, the "harmony of the day" is nearly interrupted by a political argument, which attracts the attention of Master Simon and the general who come "drifting down into the field of action" (p. 296). The action, however, is never dramatized for us; Crayon merely summarizes and abstracts the encounter.

He talked with greater volubility than ever, and soon drowned them in declamation on the subject of taxes poors' rates, and the national debt. Master Simon endeavored to brush along in his usual excursive manner, which always answered amazingly well with the villagers; but the radical was one of those pestilent fellows that pin a man down to facts; and, indeed, he had two or three pamphlets in his pocket, to support every thing he advanced by printed documents. (p. 296)

Crayon's voice is there guiding our response, this time by use of irony and humor. We are not allowed to judge for ourselves and though the scene ends with a couple lines of dialogue, the incident has little, if any, dramatic impact.

Perhaps the scene of most activity in the entire volume occurs at the end of this sketch when Phoebe, seeing Tibbets engaged in a gymnastic contest, and thinking her "recreant lover" in danger, rushes to his aid.

In a moment pride, pique, and coquetry were forgotten: she rushed into the ring, seized upon the rival champion by the hair, and was on the point of wreaking on him her puny vengeance, when a buxom, strapping country lass, the sweetheart of the prostrate swain, pounced upon her like a hawk, and would have stripped her of fine plumage in a twinkling had she also not been seized in her turn. (p. 299)



The tumult which ensues is described with a humorous detachment by Crayon.

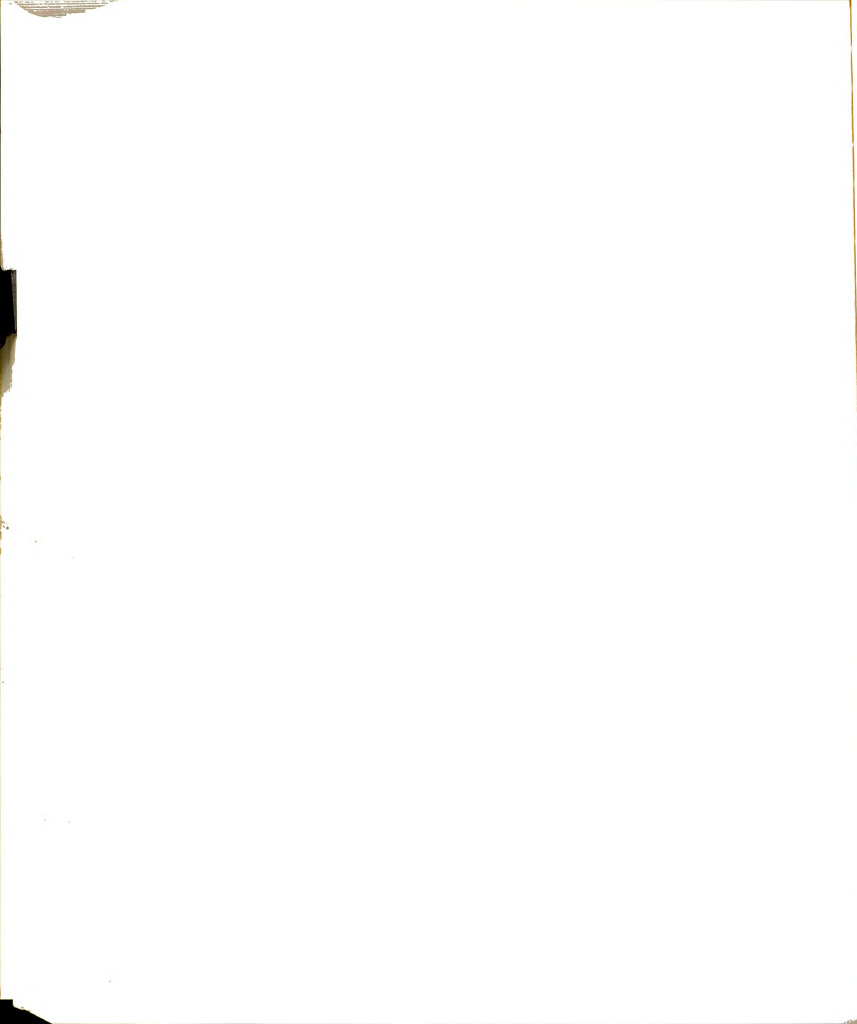
Blows began to be dealt, and sticks to be flourished. Phoebe was carried off from the field in hysterics. In vain did the sages of the village interfere. The sententious apothecary endeavored to pour the soothing oil of his philosophy upon this tempestuous sea of passion, but was tumbled into the dust. Slingsby, the pedagogue, who is a great lover of peace, went into the midst of the throng, as marshal of the day, to put an end to the commotion; but was rent in twain, and came out with his garment hanging in two strips from his shoulders: upon which the prodigal son dashed in with fury to revenge the insult sustained by his patron. (p. 300)

Not until Ready-Money Jack enters the throng does the storm settle.

Both these action scenes, despite their entertaining humor, are subject to the control and distance of the narrator. As in "Hawking" these group scenes are rendered pictorially rather than dramatically. The presence of Crayon is an essential element in each of the sketches.

G. "The Mysterious Chamber" (The Alhambra)

"The Mysterious Chamber" from The Alhambra is perhaps most dramatic illustration of the narrator's imagination. It has many similarities to "The Adventure of the Mysterious Picture" (Tales of a Traveller) and "Dolph Heyliger" (Bracebridge Hall). Wandering at night through the passageways of the Alhambra, Irving discovers the former chambers of Elizabetta, the wife of Phillip V.



The first night he spends in these quarters his imagination runs away with him. Once he is alone he is "reminded of those hobgoblin stories, where the hero is left to accomplish the adventure of an enchanted house" (p. 99). His anxiety mounts as his mind dwells on the thoughts of previous inhabitants now dead.

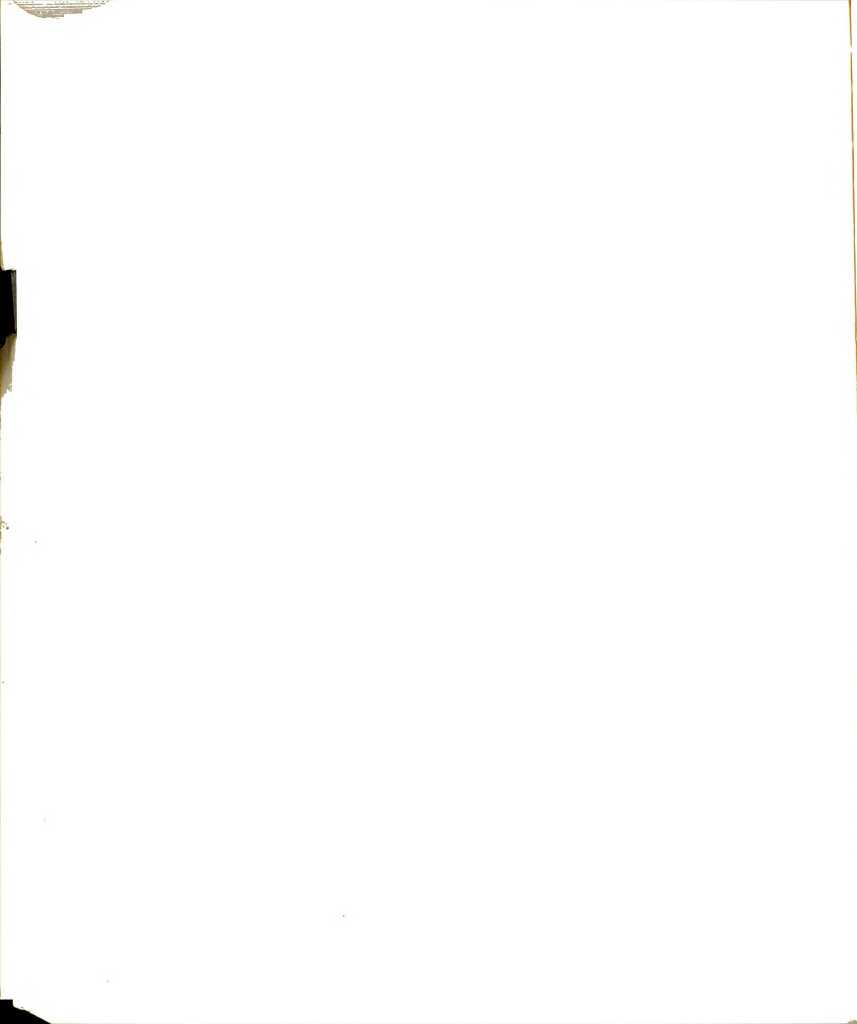
A vague and indescribable awe was creeping over me. I would fain have ascribed it to the thoughts of robbers awakened by the evening's conversation, but I felt it was something more unreal and absurd. The long-buried superstitions of the nursery were reviving, and asserting their power over my imagination. (p. 100)

In an effort to shake his apprehension, he takes a lamp and begins a tour of the surrounding rooms, but the shadows cast around him and the echoing sounds of his footsteps serve only to further his anxiety. Soon he hears low sounds and then "low moans and broken ejaculations" which send him back to his chamber with "infinitely more alacrity than I had sallied forth" (p. 101).

His fears are not subdued until the next morning when he wakes to see the sun shining in his window. Then his spirits are lifted.

I could scarcely recall the shadows and fancies conjured up by the gloom of the preceding night; or believe that the scenes around me, so naked and apparent, could have been clothed with such imaginary horrors. (p. 102)

Yet those horrors did have an effect on Irving, and the sketch serves to illustrate how active his imagination could be.



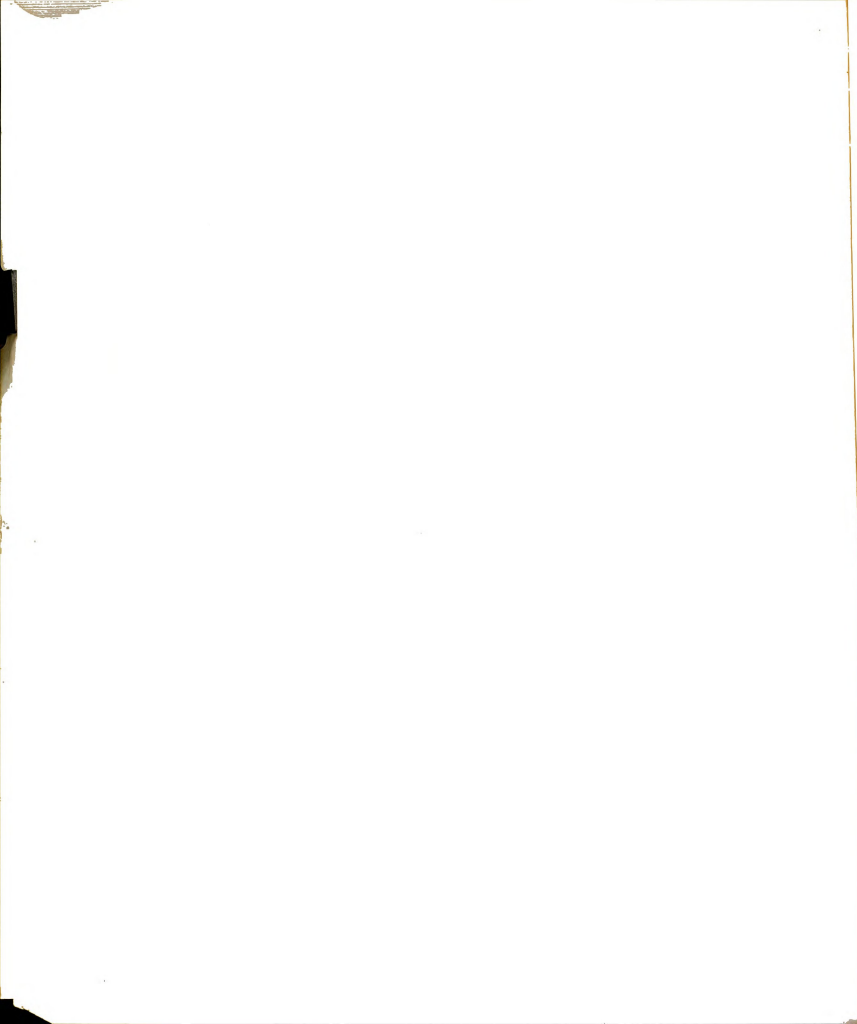
H. "The Veteran" (The Alhambra)

"The Veteran" a very short selection appearing late in The Alhambra can also be classified as a character sketch, though it is even less complete than "The Busy Man." Irving's major reason for introducing the "brave and battered old colonel of Invalids, who was nestled like a hawk in one of the Moorish towers" (p. 317), is as a source for the legend which follows the sketch. Though there is little reason to fully characterize him, Irving does devote a paragraph to the colonel's background and another paragraph to his lodgings. The historical information is catalogued summarily and in it Irving manages to make the old soldier representative of Spain's history of conflict.

He had taken a part in all the wars of his country; he could speak experimentally of most of the prisons and dungeons of the Peninsula; had been lamed of one leg, crippled in his hands, and so cut up and carbonadoed that he was a kind of walking monument of the troubles of Spain, on which there was a scar for every battle and broil, as every year of captivity was notched upon the tree of Robinson Crusoe. (p. 317)

Similar to "The Busy Man" the direct description of the man is followed by a description of his lodgings, which reinforces the characterization.

It was arranged with a soldier's precision. Three muskets and a brace of pistols, all bright and shining, were suspended against the wall, with a sabre and a cane hanging side by side, and above them, two cocked hats, one for parade, and one for ordinary use. A small shelf, containing some half dozen books, formed his library, one of which, a little old mouldy volume of philosophical maxims, was his favorite reading. This he thumbed and pondered over day by day. (p. 318)



The narrative presence of Irving is always apparent in the sketch. The description of the room is the result of a personal visit by Irving to the soldier's quarters, and it is followed by Irving's personal response to the man.

Yet he was social and kind-hearted, and provided he could be diverted from his wrongs and his philosophy, was an entertaining companion. I like these old weatherbeaten sons of fortune, and enjoy their rough campaigning anecdotes. (p. 318)

Following this personal note, Irving concludes by saying that he learned the story which follows in the next selection from the old soldier. Though this sketch is indeed slight, it does act as an example of a sketch which concentrates on characterization and it also demonstrates Irving's awareness of setting as a means of reinforcing characterization.









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