WASHINGTON IRVING AND HIS DUTCH-AMERICAN HERITAGE AS SEEN IN "A HISTORY OF NEW YORK," "THE SKETCH BOOK," "BRACEBRIDGE HALL," AND "TALES OF A TRAVELLER" (FOLKLORE)

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Abstract
This study investigates Washington Irving's use of Dutch language, literature, and popular culture, set in a historical Dutch-colonial context, in the light of their European ancestry and with the aid of Dutch sources. For the first time, the source of the Knickerbocker History's title page motto is identified as the Spiegel by Jacob Cats, an immensely popular seventeenth-century Dutch poet. The motto's subject is truth; its contrast between light and dark develops as that of reason and imagination. This contrast is maintained throughout the Knickerbocker canon. Chapter One analyzes the function of the motto's main elements as Irving manipulates them for his satire. Chapter Two provides an original identification of the History's Van Twiller motto as another borrowing from Cats's Spiegel, in which the contexts provide themes for that era and beyond. The motto announces the History's contrast between silence and sound, becomes a focal point of low comedy, and sets the stage for internal strife and warfare between the seventeenth-century colonies. It also establishes the young colony as a bucolic Eden and, like the title page motto, underscores Knickerbocker's nostalgia. Chapters Three and Four analyze the History's incidents of Dutch colonial customs and folk beliefs. Parallel Dutch lore illustrate that Irving's Hudson Valley culture is basically Old World Dutch. These incidents serve Irving's comic intent or support his major themes. For example, the Dutch St. Nicholas is transformed into a New Netherland deity, a counterpart of the ancient gods that populate Irving's mock epic. The eventual blending of diverse customs and folk beliefs depicts the genesis of an American popular culture, which in part consists of Irving's fiction. Chapter Five similarly analyzes "Rip Van Winkle," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," "The Storm-Ship," "Dolph Heyliger," and "Wolfert Webber." Although their focus is Hudson Valley Dutch popular culture, each of these literary folk tales presents a realistic theme. Three appendices list and explain Irving's use of Dutch language, popular culture, and names in the Knickerbocker canon. This study demonstrates Irving's greater familiarity with Dutch than the little with which he has been previously credited.

Subject Area
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disappearance of the elderly "Diedrich Knickerbocker," turned out to be a wild and hilarious spoof that combined real New York history with political satire. Quickly reprinted in England, it was admired by Walter Scott and Charles Dickens (who carried his copy in his pocket). A History of New York, From the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty. The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. His A History of New York... by Diedrich Knickerbocker (1809) was a comic history of the Dutch regime in New York, prefaced by a mock-pedantic account of the world from creation onward. Its writing was interrupted in April 1809 by the sudden death of Matilda Hoffman, as grief incapacitated him. In 1822 he produced Bracebridge Hall, a sequel to The Sketch Book. He traveled in Germany, Austria, France, Spain, the British Isles, and later in his own country. Washington Irving wrote several works.