Overview

“...[G]ender identity is deeply imbedded within our self experience as human beings as men and as women. Gender identity is not a concept simply limited to sexuality. It has to do with roles we play, self perception and acceptance, and the variety of ways in which we are able to relate with others” (Puls 10). Washington Irving’s works often center around characters who embody societal ideas of femininity, masculinity, gender roles and stereotypes, limited to sexuality. Puls discusses the implications of only focusing on sexuality when analyzing gender roles; however, he suggests these roles need to be influenced by self perception, acceptance, and how people relate to each other. By viewing Irving’s two male characters in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” as foils of each other, readers see the social constructs of gender and gender roles based solely on sexuality --specifically masculinity--that influence Irving’s creation of Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt.

Outline

Introduction:

● “That Irving’s tale is centrally concerned with gender is established as early as the first paragraph, in which the narrator, a quasi-objective amateur historian, makes an etymological connection between an important local place name, the village of Tarry Town, and the concept of feminine hegemony” (Anthony 2).
  ○ Discuss gender roles and masculinity/stereotypes.
    ■ “A key to gender criticism, consequently, is that gender is a socially constructed ideology that is reflected in our culture and political, social, economic, educational, and religious institutions and is coded in the very language we use” (Pennington and Cordell, Chapter 4.3).
    ■ “Such traits that are typically identified as masculine include assertiveness, instrumentality, adventuresome activities, business and mechanical interests (Kagel & Schilling, 1985), dominance and self-assertion (Mitchell, Baker, & Jacklin, 1989), strength, confidence, outgoing, energetic, and risk-taking (Kronsberg, Schmaling, & Fagot, 1985; Nicolosi, 1991). Masculine behaviors and activities include rough-and-tumble play, athletics and contact sports, childhood interest in toy vehicles (trucks, cars, and airplanes), machines, tools, building pieces and weapons, and imagination games such as war, cowboys and Indians and adventure themes (Puls 13).
  ○ Focus on the vast differences between the two male characters in Irving’s story: Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones. Why might Irving create two male characters so opposite of each other?

● By viewing Irving’s two male characters as foils of each other, readers see the social constructs of gender and gender roles--specifically masculinity--that influence Irving’s creation of Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt.
1. Irving, who largely creates characters based on the society norms of gender roles, seems to create his main character—Ichabod Crane—as a foil to Brom Bones, one that contradicts the societal norms of masculinity during the early 1800s.

- **Description of Crane:**
  - “The word ‘Ichabod’ itself suggests this: it is a Hebrew word meaning ‘inglorious,’ and unlikely epithet, perhaps, but one that suggests that we are to read the character as specifically de-masculinized” (Arnold 2).
  - “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 might have been mistaken for a weathercock perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew” (Irving 43).

- Discuss how these descriptions paint Crane as less “masculine” than his counterpart

- How does his role in society affect his “masculinity”?
  - Teacher
  - Singer
  - Dancer
  - Does not own land
  - “As Irving describes him, Ichabod is gangly and ridiculous. He is not at all the kind of person one would expect to win the heart of an eligible coquette like Katrina Van Tassle, and this is part of the logic of Irving’s story: Katrina and the luxurious agrarian fecundity she represents cannot, in the economy of Sleepy Hollow, be allowed to pass into the possession of so inappropriate a suitor” (Arnold 1).
  - “But although his ambitions are conventionally masculine [his hopes of marrying Katrina and gaining her dowry] we tend for a number of reasons to read Ichabod as feminine. Though the sceptre-like ruler with which he enforces schoolhouse discipline is clearly a phallic badge of office, Ichabod as schoolmaster is socially subservient, essentially living on the charity of the village folk. Furthermore, he spends most of his time with older, married women” (Arnold 1-2).
  - “Ichabod prided himself upon dancing as much as upon his vocal powers. Not a limb, not a fibre about him was idle, and to have seen his loosely hung frame in full motion, and clattering about the room, you would have thought Saint Vitus himself, that blessed patron of the dance, was figuring before you in person” (Irving 54).

2. Brom Van Brunt, another character Irving creates fashioned to fit in the social constructs of masculinity, arguably contrasts Crane completely.

- **Description of Brom**
  - “Among these, the most formidable, was a burley, roaring, roystering blade, of the name of Abraham, or, according to the Dutch abbreviation, Brom Van Brunt, the hero of the country round, which rung with his feats
of strength and hardihood. He was broad shouldered and double jointed, with short curly black hair, and a bluff, but not unpleasant countenance, having a mingled air of fun and arrogance” (Irving 49).

○ Discuss how Irving’s description of Brom is based almost solely on his sexuality and his physical appearance.

● How does his role in the community affect his “masculinity”?
  ○ Town Hero
  ○ “Hooligan”, “Boys-will-be-boys” mentality
    ■ “He was famed for great knowledge and skill in horseman, being as dexterous on horseback as a Tartar” (Irving 49)
    ■ “He had three or four boon companions of his own stamp, who regarded him as their model, and at the head of whom he scoured the country, attending every scene of feud or merriment for miles round” (Irving 49).
  ○ His “prank” allows Brom to marry Katrina
    ■ “Brom Bones too, who, shortly after his rival’s disappearance, conducted the blooming Katrina in triumph to the altar, was observed to look exceedingly knowing whenever the story of Ichabod was related, and always burst into a hearty laugh at the mention of the pumpkin; which led some to suspect that he know more about the matter than he chose to tell” (Irving 61).
    ■ “As he [Ichabod] was a bachelor, and in nobody’s debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him, the school was removed to a different quarter of the hollow, and another pedagogue reigned in his stead” (Irving 60).
  ● Suggests that the “real man” wins out!

Research


Throughout his research, Puls looks at the process and the construction of gender identity and focuses on the difference between males and females. He more specifically looks at masculinity and how biology, sociology, and psychology affect this process. He argues that society cannot just look at how sexuality affects gender identity, but realize that gender identity is complex and is affected by multiple factors that stem from sociological and environmental factors.

In his article, Arnold focuses on the role Ichabod plays in Sleepy Hollow, more specifically, how his role affects his masculinity. He parallels the character Ichabod Crane in the Tim Burton production of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and Washington Irving’s creation of Ichabod Crane. Arnold looks specifically at the development of the character and gender identity.

**Timeline**

Wednesday Oct. 22nd: Hand in Proposal  
Thursday Oct. 23rd: Introduction  
Friday Oct. 24th: Paragraphs on Crane  
Saturday Oct. 25th: Paragraphs on Brom  
Sunday Oct. 26th: Conclusion and Peer Review  
Monday Oct. 27th: Hand in Rough Draft