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Plan of the Series

. . . *Almost the most prodigious asset of a country, and perhaps its most precious possession, is its native literary product—when that product is fine and noble and enduring.*

Mark Twain*

The advisory board, the editors, and the publisher of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* are joined in endorsing Mark Twain's declaration. The literature of a nation provides an inexhaustible resource of permanent worth. Our purpose is to make literature and its creators better understood and more accessible to students and the reading public, while satisfying the needs of teachers and researchers.

To meet these requirements, *literary biography* has been construed in terms of the author's achievement. The most important thing about a writer is his writing. Accordingly, the entries in *DLB* are career biographies, tracing the development of the author's canon and the evolution of his reputation.

The purpose of *DLB* is not only to provide reliable information in a usable format but also to place the figures in the larger perspective of literary history and to offer appraisals of their accomplishments by qualified scholars.

The publication plan for *DLB* resulted from two years of preparation. The project was proposed to Brucoli Clark by Frederick G. Ruffner, president of the Gale Research Company, in November 1975. After specimen entries were prepared and typeset, an advisory board was formed to refine the entry format and develop the series rationale. In meetings held during 1976, the publisher, series editors, and advisory board approved the scheme for a comprehensive biographical dictionary of persons who contributed to literature. Editorial work on the first volume began in January 1977, and it was published in 1978. In order to make *DLB* more than a dictionary and to compile volumes that individually have claim to status as literary history, it was decided to organize volumes by topic, period, or

genre. Each of these freestanding volumes provides a biographical-bibliographical guide and overview for a particular area of literature. We are convinced that this organization—as opposed to a single alphabet method—constitutes a valuable innovation in the presentation of reference material. The volume plan necessarily requires many decisions for the placement and treatment of authors. Certain figures will be included in separate volumes, but with different entries emphasizing the aspect of his career appropriate to each volume. Ernest Hemingway, for example, is represented in *American Writers in Paris, 1920–1939* by an entry focusing on his expatriate apprenticeship; he is also in *American Novelists, 1910–1945* with an entry surveying his entire career, as well as in *American Short-Story Writers, 1910–1945, Second Series* with an entry concentrating on his short fiction. Each volume includes a cumulative index of the subject authors and articles.

Since 1981 the series has been further augmented by the *DLB Yearbooks*, which update published entries, add new entries to keep the *DLB* current with contemporary activity, and provide articles on literary history. There have also been nineteen *DLB Documentary Series* volumes, which provide illustrations, facsimiles, and biographical and critical source materials for figures, works, or groups judged to have particular interest for students. In 1999 the *Documentary Series* was incorporated into the *DLB* volume numbering system beginning with *DLB 210: Ernest Hemingway*.

We define literature as the *intellectual commerce of a nation*: not merely as belles lettres but as that ample and complex process by which ideas are generated, shaped, and transmitted. *DLB* entries are not limited to “creative writers” but extend to other figures who in their time and in their way influenced the mind of a people. Thus the series encompasses historians, journalists, publishers, book collectors, and screenwriters. By this means readers of *DLB* may be aided to perceive literature not as cult scripture in the keeping of intellectual high priests but firmly positioned at the center of a nation's life.

DLB includes the major writers appropriate to each volume and those standing in the ranks behind them. Scholarly and critical counsel has been sought in

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Plan of the Series

deciding which minor figures to include and how full their entries should be. Wherever possible, useful references are made to figures who do not warrant separate entries.

Each *DLB* volume has an expert volume editor responsible for planning the volume, selecting the figures for inclusion, and assigning the entries. Volume editors are also responsible for preparing, where appropriate, appendices surveying the major periodicals and literary and intellectual movements for their volumes, as well as lists of further readings. Work on the series as a whole is coordinated at the Brucoli Clark Layman editorial center in Columbia, South Carolina, where the editorial staff is responsible for accuracy and utility of the published volumes.

One feature that distinguishes *DLB* is the illustration policy—its concern with the iconography of literature. Just as an author is influenced by his surroundings, so is the reader's understanding of the author enhanced

by a knowledge of his environment. Therefore *DLB* volumes include not only drawings, paintings, and photographs of authors, often depicting them at various stages in their careers, but also illustrations of their families and places where they lived. Title pages are regularly reproduced in facsimile along with dust jackets for modern authors. The dust jackets are a special feature of *DLB* because they often document better than anything else the way in which an author's work was perceived in its own time. Specimens of the writers' manuscripts and letters are included when feasible.

Samuel Johnson rightly decreed that "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." The purpose of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is to compile literary history in the surest way available to us—by accurate and comprehensive treatment of the lives and work of those who contributed to it.

The *DLB* Advisory Board

Fitz-Greene Halleck

(8 July 1790 – 19 November 1867)

Michael Cody

East Tennessee State University

See also the Halleck entry in *DLB 3: Antebellum Writers in New York and the South*.

BOOKS: *Poems*, by Halleck and Joseph Rodman Drake as Croaker, Croaker & Co., and Croaker, Jun. (New York: N.p., 1819);

Fanny, anonymous (New York: C. Wiley, 1819); republished as *Fanny: A Poem* (London: T. Tickler, 1837); enlarged as *Fanny, with Other Poems*, anonymous (New York: Harper, 1839);

Alnwick Castle, with Other Poems, anonymous (New York: G. & C. Carvill, 1827; enlarged edition, New York: George Dearborn, 1836);

The Recorder: With Other Poems (New York: Henry Ludwig, 1833);

The Poetical Works of Fitz-Greene Halleck (New York: Appleton, 1847);

The Croakers, by Halleck and Drake (New York: N.p., 1860);

Young America: A Poem (New York: D. Appleton, 1865);

Lines to the Recorder (New York [Printed by Alvord], 1866);

The Poetical Writings of Fitz-Greene Halleck; With Extracts from Those of Joseph Rodman Drake, edited by James Grant Wilson (New York: D. Appleton, 1869);

Poems (New York: Hurst, n.d.).

OTHER: *The Works of Lord Byron, in Verse and Prose . . . with a Sketch of His Life*, edited by Halleck (New York: George Dearborn, 1833);

Selections from the British Poets, 2 volumes, edited by Halleck (New York: Harper, 1840).

Fitz-Greene Halleck was one of the most popular and important American poets during the first half of the nineteenth century. A member of the Knickerbocker Group of New York, he was known as the American Byron because of his romantic and satirical (though often imitative) verse. Halleck's business was banking, but as a literary amateur he won such fame that on 15 May 1877, almost ten years after his death,



Fitz-Greene Halleck, 1828 (portrait by Henry Inman; New-York Historical Society)

a statue of him was unveiled in New York's Central Park during a ceremony attended by such luminaries as President Rutherford B. Hayes, William Tecumseh Sherman, and William Cullen Bryant.

Born on 8 July 1790, Fitz-Greene Halleck was one of three children of Israel Halleck and Mary Eliot Halleck of Guilford, Connecticut. The poet's paternal lineage stretches back through various Puritan, Royalist, and Quaker ancestors to Peter Hallock, who in 1640, tradition says, was one of the first Englishmen to settle the north shore of Long Island. Halleck's maternal great-great-great-grandfather was John Eliot, the Apostle to the Indians and one of the

translators of the *Bay Psalm Book*. Although little is known of Fitz-Greene's early home life, his mother, Mary, apparently retained more of the New England Puritan background than did her husband. Still, she was a lover of poetry and probably helped develop a similar love in young Fitz-Greene. Israel Halleck was a Royalist and, during the American Revolution, often in the company of Colonel Banastre Tarleton both on campaigns and at table. In the small Puritan town of Guilford, he lived life in the spirit of an English cavalier, a character his son Fitz-Greene later also assumed to some extent.

James Grant Wilson, Halleck's first biographer, in *The Life and Letters of Fitz-Greene Halleck* (1869) describes the young poet as a precocious child. Halleck took advantage of what formal education Guilford offered; he began reading early and once claimed to have read every book in the Guilford public library. His first attempts at poetry—"A View of the United States," "The History of New England," and "The Fortunate Family"—were probably written when he was eleven or twelve years old. At fifteen, Halleck began work, keeping the accounts at a relative's store in Guilford. He joined the state militia in the summer of 1808 and soon achieved the rank of sergeant. The following winter he began an evening school in which he taught bookkeeping, along with arithmetic and writing. All the while, Halleck continued to compose verse, and in 1810 two of his poems were published in a New York newspaper, *The Columbian*—"Paraphrase of an Extract from the Italian by Mrs. Radcliffe" (22 August 1810) and "The Indian Warrior" (28 September 1810).

In May 1811 Halleck moved to New York, where after two months he found work in the offices of a Quaker banker, Jacob Barker. New York was morally and intellectually freer than Guilford, and Halleck evolved from a narrow village boy to a young man broadened by experience in the world. But being reserved and sensitive, he lived some time in New York before forming any friendships. One of the first of these friendships, and by far the most important for Halleck's early career in letters, was with Joseph Rodman Drake, a young physician and poet. After establishing this successful relationship, Halleck began widening his social connections in the city by joining the Ugly Club, of which he was elected poet laureate in 1814. That same year, as the War of 1812 wore on, Halleck wrote several successful war lyrics. Part of a volunteer troop organized for the defense of New York, the poet wrote an ode named for this military company, "The Iron Grays." The verses inspired the entire camp and were subsequently published in *The Columbian* (29 October

1814). After the war ended, Halleck broadened his social circle in New York, took two trips into the Southern states in 1816, and continued to develop his friendship with Drake.

Halleck's apprenticeship as a poet ended when he and Drake published what has come to be known as the Croaker Papers. These thirty-five satirical poems appeared in the *New-York Evening Post* and the *National Advertiser* between March and July 1819. As Croaker, Drake wrote fourteen of the poems in the series; Halleck wrote another thirteen, under the pseudonym Croaker, Junior; and the two poets collaborated on another eight as Croaker & Co. The poems addressed current topics of either local or national interest, and they and their mysterious authors quickly became the talk of the town. Light and playful rather than dark and scathing, the tone and detail of the Croakers' satires delighted New Yorkers and inspired many imitators.

The majority of the later Croaker poems were written by Halleck. Drake, who had contracted tuberculosis during the winter of 1816–1817, was growing worse, and in the autumn and winter of 1819, he made a desperate visit to New Orleans in the hope of improving his health. Because of the success of the Croaker Papers, Halleck began to feel that he had come into his own as a poet, and he wrote throughout the solitary time left him by Drake's absence. The result was the long poem *Fanny*, published in New York on 27 December 1819.

Fanny sold well, in part because of its connection with the successful Croaker Papers; the poem extends the satire of the earlier works as it rambles through New York scenes and society. Similar in form and tone to *Beppo* (1818) and *Don Juan* (1819) by George Gordon, Lord Byron, Halleck's poem tells more of Fanny's father's story than that of the young woman for whom the work is named. Having begun as a merchant with "A retail dry-goods store in Chatham Street," Fanny's father rises to the ranks of the nouveau riche, and,

having mustered wherewithal to meet
The gaze of the great world, he breathed the air
Of Pearl Street—and "set up" in Hanover Square.

After rambling through bits of narrative interrupted by the speaker's "tea-table chat" about the life and personalities of New York, as well as the lyrics of songs the merchant writes, the poem reaches its conclusion. In the midst of the party of which Fanny has always dreamed, "When she in turn should be a *belle*," a great chandelier crashes to the floor, ruining the party and foreshadowing the following evening when

with a most important face
 And dreadful knock, and tidings still more dreadful,
 A notary came—sad things had taken place. . . .

Soon the house is for rent, and Fanny and her father disappear to some unknown place where they “live . . . upon air / And hope, and such cold, unsubstantial dishes. . . .” The poem is an early example of Halleck’s thematic concentration on the conflict between dreams and reality.

Critical reactions to *Fanny* were mixed. A reviewer in the 6 January 1820 issue of the *New-York Evening Post* wrote that, although similarities existed between *Fanny* and *Beppo*, “the imitation will be found in most respects superior to the original.” But many readers outside New York had difficulty reading the poem because of its many local allusions. Much later, in the July 1846 issue of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, Edgar Allan Poe wrote, “If we except a certain gentlemanly ease and *insouciance*, with some fancy of illustration, there is really very little about this poem to be admired.” Poe did not approve of the lack of formality in Halleck’s verses, but at times the colloquial quality in *Fanny* points toward the more natural poetics of Walt Whitman.

Drake returned from his journey to New Orleans in the spring of 1820. The trip had done little, however, to prolong his life, and he died in September. In “On the Death of Joseph Rodman Drake,” Halleck begins with a memorial epitaph that praises Drake’s public character:

Green be the turf above thee,
 Friend of my better days!
 None knew thee but to love thee,
 Nor named thee but to praise.

But the poem ends with Halleck’s private grief:

While memory bids me weep thee,
 Nor thoughts nor words are free,
 The grief is fixed too deeply
 That mourns a man like thee.

Drake’s death stunned Halleck, and in the summer of 1822, troubled by depression, he booked passage to England, apparently in an effort to restore his health.

At the end of September—after seeing London and its environs and making a brief journey into France—Halleck headed north for a visit to Scotland. Along the way he stopped by Percy Castle at Alnwick. There, in early October, he wrote one of his most noted poems, “Alnwick Castle.” The poet tells of his visit to the “Home of Percy’s high-born race.” In the beginning the poem reveals a romantic preoccupation with the castle’s

glorious past, its vine-covered ruins, and its lush natural surroundings:

A gentle hill its side inclines,
 Lovely in England’s fadeless green,
 To meet the quiet stream which winds
 Through this romantic scene
 As silently and sweetly still,
 As when, at evening, on that hill,
 While summer’s wind blew soft and low,
 Seated by gallant Hotspur’s side,
 His Katherine was a happy bride,
 A thousand years ago.

But as the poet reads “upon the chapel walls / Each high, heroic name” in the Percy history, he sees the family’s prestige slowly dwindling, from the one member who fought in the Crusades to the one who “Fought for King George at Lexington, / A major of dragoons.” At this point, the poem takes on a marked sense of disillusionment as those “romantic times” of Hotspur’s England have given way to “this bank-note world” in which “Alnwick’s but a market town.” The world the poet inhabits is in decline. Although “Nature’s aristocracy” still exists at Percy’s Castle in the beauty of the current chambermaid, the old home and its history have become a commodity that the traveler can experience “For ten-and-sixpence sterling.” This sense of being unable to reconcile the ideal and the real is characteristic of Halleck’s poetry.

Halleck returned to the United States in 1823, where “Alnwick Castle” was published in the 6 December issue of the *New-York Evening Post*. Throughout the middle years of the 1820s, his literary reputation continued to increase, and his social circle broadened to include the Sedgwicks, James Fenimore Cooper, Samuel F. B. Morse, Gulian Verplanck, James Kirke Paulding, Richard Henry Dana, and Bryant. In a 20 January 1825 letter Catharine Maria Sedgwick describes to her brother Charles her impression on first meeting Halleck at a party:

He had a reddish, brown complexion, and a heavy jaw, but an eye so full of the fire and sweetness of poetry that you at once own him for one of the privileged order. He does not act as if he had spent his life in groves and temples, but he has the courtesy of a man of society. He dances with grace, and talks freely and without parade.

During this period Halleck wrote “Lines on the Death of Lieut. Allen,” “Magdalen,” “Woman,” “Marco Bozzaris,” and “Connecticut.” Bryant published “Marco Bozzaris” in the first issue of *The New-York Review, and Athenaeum Magazine* (June 1825). The poem tells the story of Greek patriot Marco Boz-

zaris's August 1823 death in battle during the Greek war for independence. It was a popular subject, and "Marco Bozzaris" was reprinted in several American and British publications over the next year and a half. Halleck's "Connecticut" also appeared in *The New-York Review* (March 1826). A longer lyric than either "Alnwick Castle" or "Marco Bozzaris," "Connecticut" includes more substantial American materials than the earlier poems—stanzas on such subjects as Connecticut's geography and the character of its people, the last witch trial in the state, Cotton Mather, and "Yankee Doodle."

The first collected edition of Halleck's poetry, *Alnwick Castle, with Other Poems*, appeared in 1827. In addition to the title poem, Halleck included sixteen of his more serious works, some of which were "Marco Bozzaris," "Connecticut," "Woman," "Magdalen," "On the Death of Joseph Rodman Drake," "Burns," and "Wyoming." "Burns"—inspired by Halleck's 1822 trip to Scotland, where he visited Robert Burns's birthplace and grave—had been published in the *United States Review and Literary Gazette* (January 1827), and after its inclusion in *Alnwick Castle, with Other Poems*, it became one of Halleck's most enduring lyrics. Critics in general voiced overwhelming approval of Halleck's talents displayed in the new book; their only regret was that the poet had not written more. The slender volume sold out quickly.

As Halleck's reputation as a poet and man of letters increased, his literary production began slowly to decrease. Although he wrote what was for him an unusual number of poems in the years between leaving Barker's employ late in 1828 and becoming the private secretary of John Jacob Astor in 1832, Halleck published relatively little new poetry for the remainder of his life. He began contributing his work to annuals and seeing it selected for anthologies such as Samuel Kettel's *Specimens of American Poetry* (1829) and George Barrell Cheever's *American Common-Place Book of Poetry* (1831). In addition to editing the 1832 publication of the poetic and prose works of Byron, Halleck wrote a few poems—including "The Field of the Grounded Arms," "Red Jacket," and "A Poet's Daughter"—that later appeared in George Dearborn's 1836 enlarged edition of *Alnwick Castle, with Other Poems*. In 1833 Halleck published *The Recorder: With Other Poems*, a short pamphlet; the title piece had been written in 1828 at the height of Barker's legal battle against Richard Riker, recorder of New York City, and it had already appeared in both the *New-York Evening Post* (20 December 1828) and the *New-York American* (24 December 1828). Despite his no longer being as creatively active as he had been in the 1820s, Halleck was increasingly sought after as a



Joseph Rodman Drake, Halleck's literary collaborator, circa 1820 (engraving by Thomas Kelly)

judge of literary contests and as a favorite guest at balls and parties.

Although a good poet, Halleck was never truly original. He was largely influenced by his reading, which, although limited by his relative lack of any deep knowledge of the classics, was broadened somewhat by his familiarity with European languages, especially French. His primary influences were the Bible and English poets such as William Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, Thomas Gray, Robert Southey, William Wordsworth, Byron, and Thomas Campbell. Halleck's theory of poetry, according to Nelson Frederick Adkins in *Fitz-Greene Halleck: An Early Knickerbocker Wit and Poet* (1930), was based on "a poet's ability to emotionalize the fact—to transform events by the subtle power of the imagination." Halleck's strength lay in his lyricism, and the strength of this quality, in turn, lay in his power of expression, his "ability," Adkins says, "to compress meaning into a single line or phrase." But what ultimately prohibited Halleck from becoming a great poet was that his facility of expression outstripped his feeling. Thus, in his lighter verse his technique and sensibilities are most evenly matched.

Another element in Halleck's character that hindered his development as a poet was his belief

that a life solely devoted to belles lettres was impractical. In this notion can be seen both the balance and conflict between character elements that were the legacy of his parents: from his father, he gained a love of beauty; from his mother, a Puritan practicality. This juxtaposition of character elements naturally found its way into his poetry. In many of his best poems Halleck struggles without success to reconcile the differences between the world of the romantic ideal and that of quotidian reality.

Halleck never committed himself wholly to poetry, but he maintained a literary reputation, assuring both himself and his poetry a place in the literary life of the United States of the nineteenth century. New editions of his work continued to appear throughout his lifetime, and in 1837 Columbia College awarded him—along with fellow poets Bryant and Charles Fenno Hoffman—an honorary Master of Arts. In 1840 Halleck edited *Selections from the British Poets*, published by Harper and Brothers. Two years later, in February 1842, he met Charles Dickens during the novelist's famous visit to America. But throughout the 1840s Halleck's life was largely a social one, and he seems to have written little, if any, poetry, despite great encouragement from the literary world.

Early in 1849 Halleck left New York and retired to his native Guilford, but he made frequent trips—almost annually for the Fourth of July—to the

city in which he had lived so long, keeping in touch with the literary culture of which he had so long been a part. He published one more piece of poetry during his retirement; "Young America" appeared in the *Ledger* (23 January 1864), but it is a weak satire of America as a fifteen-year-old boy and shows only occasional sparks of Halleck's former satirical vigor. After one last visit to New York in October 1867, Fitz-Greene Halleck died peacefully in Guilford the following month. On 8 July 1869 a monument was erected over his grave, during the dedication of which, a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes was read. Eight years later the Halleck statue was dedicated in New York's Central Park.

References:

- Nelson Frederick Adkins, *Fitz-Greene Halleck: An Early Knickerbocker Wit and Poet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930);
 Joseph Slater, "The Case of Drake and Halleck," *Early American Literature*, 8 (Winter 1974): 285–297;
 James Grant Wilson, *The Life and Letters of Fitz-Greene Halleck* (New York: Appleton, 1869).

Papers:

The major collection of Fitz-Greene Halleck manuscripts and correspondence constitutes part of the Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature at the University of Virginia.