

This book re-examines the literary significance of poet and translator William Cowper (1731-1800). Cowper is too often read as an escapist poet, whose retirement constitutes and attitude of political retreat and disengagement. This book recovers the highly politicised context of retirement as a mode of political opposition in the eighteenth century and shows the extent to which one poet drew from, and contributed to, this radical traditions. Far from retreating from civic engagement into private meditation, Cowper characteristically chose to escape from the self-enclosed misery of private meditation into his own carefully plotted version of social responsibility. The fascination of Cowper lies in his inability to centre his life and work around any one paradigm, his refusal to synthesize his experience and his characteristic mode of oscillation between alternatives, a mode which has its roots in popular eighteenth century understandings of digression as a positive literary attitude. An ideal of a balanced rural life is constantly considered, re-evaluated and yet postponed as Cowpers poetry evidences a strong fear of the more intransigent and unappeasable aspects of nature. Claustrophobic and agoraphobic, the space for sane, useful existence proves elusive in the extreme. The emblem of the castaway, forever representative in a world where faith has become detached from forms and dogma and become a matter of emotional correctness a condition of feeling rather than either creed or ritual. The contradictions inherent in this mainstream ideological tendency claim Cowper as one of their most prominent victims.

Couples - Entre disputes et amour (French Edition), The Killer Angels (Random House Large Print), In Mexican Prisons: The Journal of Eduard Harkort, 1832-1834, Demonios de la conciencia (Spanish Edition), Ghost Dancer, Love Letters to Ani: a haiku chapbook, Carving Pen Figures (Schiffer Book for Woodcarvers),

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