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Mr Higgins's Hayley: A provincial gentleman's copy of Hayley's *Life of Cowper* and what it tells us about the writing and publishing of a literary biography in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Student no. 1440829

Dissertation submitted for the degree of MA

in the History of the Book

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My thanks to the Trustees of the Cowper and Newton Museum for allowing the use of images in figures 2-6 from the extra-illustrated copy of *The Life of Cowper*, shelfmark OLNCN: 3897. Thanks also to Brother John of the Monastery of Christ Our Saviour at Turvey Abbey for permission to use the two illustrations from John Higgins's commonplace book, figures 7 and 8.

INTRODUCTION

This study takes as its starting point a first edition copy of *The Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper Esq.*, which once belonged to the Higgins family of Turvey Abbey in Bedfordshire. The book was by William Hayley (1745-1820), and it was printed in 1803/4 in three quarto volumes by a provincial printer, Joseph Seagrave of Chichester. Its nominal publisher was the prominent London bookseller Joseph Johnson. The unique quality of the Turvey Abbey copy lies in the series of engravings and pen and ink drawings which were added by an early nineteenth century owner. These ‘extra-illustrations’ sit alongside the engravings originally supplied with the book, which were prepared by William Hayley’s protégé and neighbour William Blake.

In 2005, the three volumes were acquired from a local dealer by the Cowper and Newton Museum in Buckinghamshire, for the house where Cowper once lived, with the help of a grant from the Friends of the National Libraries.¹ The books were prized for their elegant binding and extra-illustration, although their immediate provenance was unknown. The purpose of this study is to look at the three volumes in greater detail to see what they might reveal about their past history, and about the writing and publication of a fashionable literary biography in the early years of the nineteenth century.

¹ William Hayley, *The Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper Esq.*, 3 vols, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1803/4), Cowper and Newton Museum shelfmark OLN CN:3897.

William Hayley regularly added to his *Life of Cowper* after its first publication. The work was several times reprinted and enlarged, (see *Appendix A* for a list of editions printed between 1803 and 1812). The book's subject, William Cowper (1731-1800), has been called 'perhaps the most admired poet at the end of the long eighteenth century'.² After Cowper's death, the demand for his poetry continued to increase. New editions of his *Collected Poems* appeared at least once a year, both when the poems remained in copyright up until 1814, and beyond.³ Hayley's researches added lost poems to the canon.

Hayley's *Life of Cowper* remained a desirable purchase even after Hayley's own death in 1820. In 1827, the title was still recommended, in '4 vols, octavo' at a price of £1 10s., in a list of 'Detached biography, or Single Lives,' suitable for an English gentleman's library, compiled by the bookseller William Goodhugh.⁴ Hayley's book was in impressive company. The titles in the list included memoirs and histories such as the *Autobiography of Gibbon*, originally published as a preface to Gibbon's posthumous works, Southey's *Life of Nelson*, *Memoirs of Lord Byron*, and Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*. Goodhugh reminded his readers that Cowper's first poems were badly received: 'there was not a Review that did not load them with the most scurrilous abuse, and condemn them to the butter shops'. But once Cowper's second volume of poetry was published

² Norma Russell, *A Bibliography of William Cowper to 1837* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1963), p. xvi, also quoted by William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.207.

³ Russell, p. xvi.

⁴ William Goodhugh, *The English Gentleman's Library Manual, or a Guide to the Formation of a Library of Select Literature* (London: 1827), p. 297.

in 1784, when *The Task* appeared in print for the first time, ‘Cowper was hailed as the first poet of his age’.⁵

As a bookseller, Goodhugh was interested in the vagaries of the book trade. His passage on Cowper tells the story of Cowper’s copyright, acquired without payment by Joseph Johnson before Cowper became famous; and sold in 32 shares for the remarkable sum of £6,764 in 1812, even though the copyright had only two years still to run. Hayley’s biography of Cowper was also reported to have earned unprecedented sums of money. According to Alexander Stephens, the biographer of John Horne Tooke, the *Life of Cowper* ranked alongside Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Pope’s *Translation of Homer* and Dr Johnson’s *Dictionary* as one of four most profitable titles of the period.⁶ A footnote to this passage reads ‘*I have been assured that Mr Hayley received the almost incredible sum of eleven thousand pounds by the Life of Cowper alone!’. This was a huge sum for a writer; Wordsworth’s total literary earnings, as late as 1835, amounted to less than £1,000.⁷ Even compared with the Lord Chancellor’s earnings the sum was large; according to tax records for the years around 1800, Lord Eldon, the wealthiest member of the legal profession, had taxable income of £12,700.⁸ Stephens’s statement of Hayley’s

⁵ Goodhugh, p.297.

⁶ Alexander Stephens, *Memoirs of John Horne Tooke, interspersed with original documents*, Senate House Special Collections copy, 2 vols (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1813), II, p. 497.

⁷ Dustin Griffin, ‘The rise of the professional author?’, in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain 1695-1830*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner, (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.143.

⁸ T. V. Jackson, ‘British incomes circa 1800’, *Economic History Review*, 52. 2 (1999), pp. 257-283.

earnings was quite possibly accurate, given that the publisher of his biography of Horne Tooke also published Hayley's *Life of Cowper*.

Hayley himself was reticent about his earnings from his writings, although his *Memoirs* suggest that he constantly worried about shortage of money.⁹ As a gentleman, it may have been unseemly for him to earn his living from his pen. According to Lucy Peltz in her work on Walpole's circle, 'the dissemination and consumption of a work which gave rise to discussion and appraisal was idealised as the gentleman's true reward'.¹⁰ Yet surviving letters show that Hayley became closely involved in the practicalities of publishing *The Life of Cowper*.

William Hayley had met and corresponded with Cowper and was a long-term admirer of his poetry and translations. He lobbied the Lord Chancellor and the Prime Minister for a pension for him, and after Cowper died he continued to promote his belief in Cowper's genius by writing his biography.¹¹ *The Life of Cowper* was recently described in Jane Darcy's 2013 study *Melancholy and Literary Biography* as 'the first significant literary biography of the nineteenth century', and one which stimulated debate about the responsibilities of a biographer.¹² Darcy writes that Hayley's portrayal of Cowper as a religious melancholic 'unwittingly destroys Cowper's reputation'.¹³

⁹ William Hayley, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Hayley, Esq., the Friend and Biographer of Cowper*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1823).

¹⁰ Lucy Peltz, 'A friendly gathering: The social politics of presentation books and their extra-illustration in Horace Walpole's circle', *Journal of the History of Collections* 19.1 (2007), pp. 33-49 (p. 34).

¹¹ Described in *Memorials of William Hayley*, British Library Add. Ms.33887.

¹² Jane Darcy, *Melancholy and Literary Biography 1640-1816* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 108.

¹³ Darcy, p. 102.

Jane Darcy's book belongs to what William St Clair has called the 'parade-of-author' approach,¹⁴ in contrast, his own study of the development of the eighteenth century book trade, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, is about the economics of the book business, with a focus on copyright and on numbers of editions and sizes of print runs. He wrote that parade-of-author histories, 'being almost exclusively concerned with authorial inputs rather than readerly outputs, cannot tell much about impacts and influence.'

It is the argument of this dissertation that a study of the material book, in this case the Turvey Abbey copy of *The Life of Cowper*, and the circumstances in which the work was written and published, will complement a more theoretical study such as Jane Darcy's and will contribute to current understanding of the nature and appetite for biography in the years around 1800.

Readers of Hayley's biography would have been familiar with Cowper's poetry and his love of nature, but less so with his early life. Educated at Westminster School Cowper was intended for a career as a lawyer. He took rooms in the Middle Temple and enjoyed city life for several years, but suffered some kind of nervous breakdown. After a suicide attempt and a year in an asylum he underwent an evangelical conversion. His family moved him to lodgings in the country; he then moved to Olney in rural north Buckinghamshire with his companion Mrs Unwin. For thirty years he lived a quiet life, never travelling

¹⁴ St Clair, p. 433.

more than a few miles, but keeping in contact with his friends by letter. He was constantly short of money. He enjoyed the status of ‘gentleman’; his great-uncle Earl Cowper had been twice Lord Chancellor. The publication of *The Task* in 1784 helped make his literary reputation. He resumed contact with his cousin Lady Hesketh, a wealthy widow who dined on occasion with King George III and his daughters. She encouraged Cowper to move from Olney to a house on the Throckmortons’ estate at Weston Underwood, This was the village where John Higgins, who later inherited Turvey Abbey, was brought up.

In 1792 Cowper was working on a translation of Milton’s Latin and Italian poems when William Hayley, then engaged on a biography of Milton, made contact with him. Hayley visited Cowper in Weston Underwood in May 1792; the visit was a great success and two months later Cowper undertook the journey to Hayley’s estate at Earham in Sussex.¹⁵ Thereafter Cowper’s recurrent depression grew much worse. In 1795 his great nephew the Reverend John Johnson, (referred to by relatives as ‘Cousin Johnny’, and no relation to Cowper’s publisher Joseph Johnson), removed Cowper to East Dereham in Norfolk. Cowper’s relatives, and most particularly Lady Hesketh, were determined to protect his reputation. She threatened to invoke the law if any hack writer or bookseller, or even previous acquaintances of Cowper’s such as the preacher John Newton, dared to write about him:

¹⁵ William Hayley, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Hayley, Esq. the Friend and Biographer of Cowper*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1823), I, p. 28.

...if Mr Newton or anybody else who knew our dear Cousin should have encouraged any of the Quill-drivers of the Age to draw their pens on this occasion I shall be very angry! – An attempt was made to do this a year and a half ago of wh. Mr Rose informed me, and I then desired him to inform those who had formed such a plan that whatever they might write should be instantly disavowed by Mr Cowper’s family and that we should prosecute, Printer, Publisher &c. This quashed it for a time.¹⁶

Instead Lady Hesketh determined on what would now be called an authorised biography, to be written by Hayley. The eventual book can be described as an ‘epistolary biography’; for the first time readers were able to enjoy the liveliness of Cowper’s letters and were treated to poems never before published.

The content of this dissertation is arranged in three chapters. **Chapter I** examines the material aspects of the extra-illustrated copy from Turvey Abbey, a small country estate on the borders of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, (see map on page 9). **Chapter 2** traces the process of writing the biography from the time of Cowper’s death in 1800 to the publication of the first two volumes in early 1803, and sets *The Life of Cowper* in the context of biographical writing of the time. **Chapter 3** considers the financial aspects of the publication, and whether or not the successive editions of *The Life of Cowper* could possibly have made eleven thousand pounds for Hayley, as claimed in Alexander Stephens’s footnote.

¹⁶ Lady Hesketh to Johnny Johnson, Bath 28 May 1800, *Letters of Lady Hesketh to the Rev. John Johnson, LLD. Concerning their kinsman William Cowper the Poet*, ed. by Catharine Bodham-Johnson (London: Jarrold & Sons, 1901), p.106-107.

Finally the conclusion will consider whether Hayley's *Life of Cowper*, a book that has been largely forgotten for almost two hundred years, can usefully add the understanding of literary biography in this period, and of the book trade more generally.

CHAPTER ONE

The particular interest of the Turvey Abbey copy of Hayley's *Life of Cowper* lies in its extra-illustration and its association with William Cowper. The book also has occasional pencilled annotations by one or more unknown readers, but these lie outside the scope of this dissertation.

In his introduction to *Books as History: the importance of books beyond their texts*, David Pearson wrote of the value of looking beyond the written content to the individual history and appearance of the book itself. He noted that before the mechanisation of print no two copies of a book were identical in terms of their appearance.¹⁷ A comparison of some surviving copies of Hayley's *Life of Cowper* bears this out.

The original owner of the Higgins copy was most probably John Higgins (1768-1846), whose family came from Weston Underwood, the village to which Cowper moved house in 1786. Cowper was by then a reputed poet. John, very much younger, was known as an amateur artist and was mentioned several times in Cowper's correspondence. In 1788 he ran occasional errands for Cowper in London, acting as a go-between to Cowper's friend and banker Joseph Hill.¹⁸ Cowper referred to him as the 'Weston artist' in a letter to his cousin Lady Hesketh, asking her to get two 'very neat Landscapes' framed and glazed for

¹⁷ David Pearson, *Books as History: the importance of books beyond their texts*, (London: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2008), p. 23.

¹⁸ James King and Charles Ryskamp, *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, 5 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), I, pp. 91, 193, 241.

him;¹⁹ later she was to recall a visit to Weston when Higgins made a silhouette of Cowper.²⁰ That same silhouette, or a copy of it, is one of the extra illustrations bound into the first volume of ‘Mr Higgins’s Hayley’, together with John Higgins’s drawings of Weston Underwood, and a set of engravings known as *Cowper, Illustrated by a Series of Views*, published by the London topographical publishers Vernor and Hood. [See *Appendix B* for a list of the extra-illustrations and their positioning in the book].

Much of the bibliographical work in recording the various editions of the book has been done; Norma Russell, at one time Librarian of Somerville College, produced an exhaustive bibliography of the works of William Cowper, including biographical works written about him in the years up to 1837, the year of Southey’s publication of Cowper’s collected works.²¹ Russell examined copies of Hayley’s *Life* from the Bodleian and associated Oxford colleges, the British Library and the Cowper Museum in Olney.²² She also consulted copies belonging to the Cowper scholar Kenneth Povey and to the bibliophile John Sparrow. Povey’s collection was later acquired by Princeton. Sparrow gave his Cowper collection to the Cowper Museum in Olney, which now has five sets of Hayley’s *Life*.

¹⁹ *Letters and Prose Writings*, III, p. 519 (27 May 1791).

²⁰ Bodham-Johnson, Lady Hesketh to John Johnson, 28 May 1800, pp. 106-107.

²¹ Norma Russell, *A Bibliography of William Cowper to 1837* (Oxford, Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1963).

²² COPAC records at least a dozen other 1803/4 copies of the first edition. Copies at the British Library and the Cowper Museum were consulted for the purposes of this dissertation.

Based on the copies that she had seen, Russell compared the differences between particular editions; her detailed notes on the state of the plates, the paper, and changes in font are so admirably recorded that they will not be repeated here. She was unaware of the copy from Turvey Abbey. Russell made no particular mention of the two sets in the British Library, both first editions acquired early in the history of the library. One belonged to George III's library. The other, in four volumes was rebound but bears the old *Mvseum Britannicvm* library stamp used until around 1836.²³ The fourth volume of that set incorporates Hayley's 'SUPPLEMENTARY PAGES TO THE LIFE OF COWPER CONTAINING THE ADDITIONS MADE TO THAT WORK *ON REPRINTING IT IN OCTAVO*' published in 1806.

The Higgins copy was not unique in having additional illustrations, but these were rare. Of the thirty-nine UK and Irish copies of *The Life of Cowper* listed on COPAC as published before 1813, only one is recorded as extra-illustrated. That copy, at St Andrews, contains a set of the Vernor and Hood *Cowper, Illustrated* views, as does another copy at the Cowper Museum. In addition there exists a remarkable extra-illustrated version in the Hannay Collection at Princeton, to be described later in this chapter, and another at the Victoria Library in Toronto.

The historian of printing Stanley Morison selected Seagrave's printing of *The Life of Cowper* as an outstanding example of elegant typography.²⁴ He chose as

²³ Provenance information at

<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/prbooks/provenanceresearch/provenanceresearch.html>

²⁴ Stanley Morison, *Four centuries of Fine Printing*, 2 vols, 4th edn (London: 1924 reprinted E. Benn, 1960), II.

an illustration the first page of the dedication to Cowper's relative Earl Cowper rather than the title page. The wording of the title pages to both Volumes I and II reads as follows:

THE| LIFE, | AND | *POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS*, / OF | WILLIAM
 COWPER, ESQR. | WITH AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER | TO THE
 | *RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL COWPER*. ||| BY WILLIAM
 HAYLEY ESQR. |||| [4-line Latin quotation from Pliny's letters] |
 [French rule] | VOL I [II] ||| Chichester: | *Printed by J. Seagrave*;
 | FOR J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,
 LONDON. || 1803

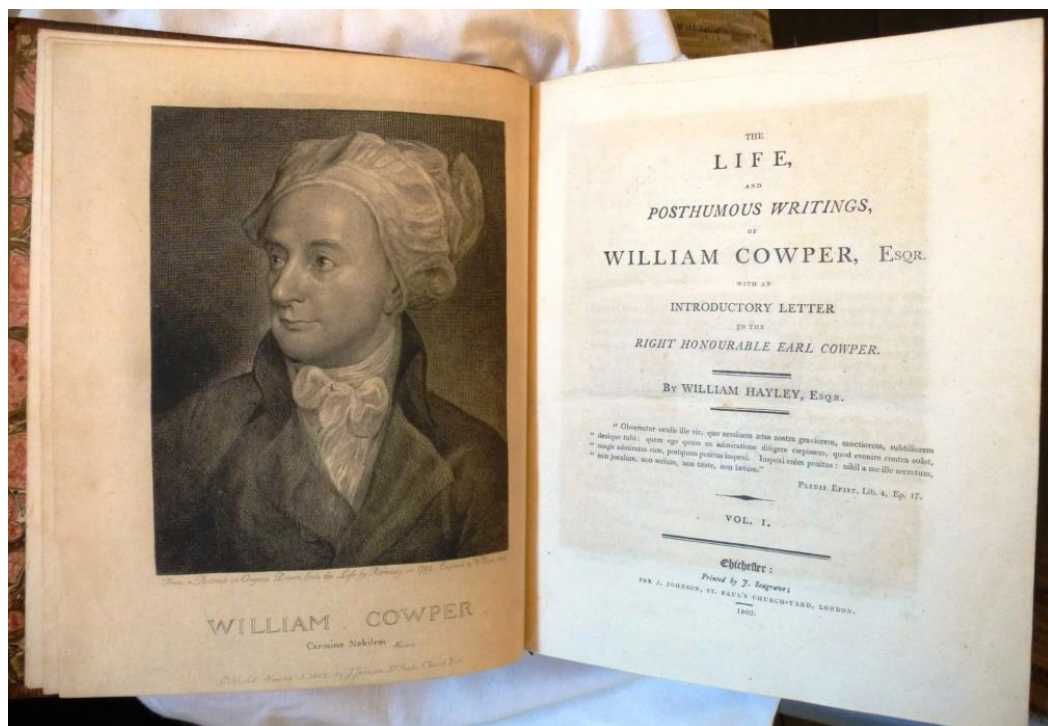


Figure 2: Title page to Volume I of Mr Higgins's Hayley, and William Blake's frontispiece.

The dedication follows on the next ten pages, [III] to XII. It extols the virtues of Cowper as a poet and the Cowper family. The dedication was repeated in all the later editions. Hayley's use of an aristocratic dedicatee from Cowper's own family provided prestige, although it is unlikely that the Earl had anything to do with the preparation of the content.²⁵

The third volume of *The Life of Cowper* was published the following year. The title page repeated the text of the title pages of the previous volumes, simply adding 'VOL III', the date 1804 and slightly amended punctuation. This third volume brought together Cowper's letters to two additional correspondents. Hayley also added a lengthy introductory essay entitled 'Desultory Remarks on the Lives of Eminent Persons, particularly those of Pope and Cowper'.

It seems from Norma Russell's work that buyers of the early quarto copies received them in blue-grey boards with a printed label. They could have the volumes rebound as they preferred. The Higgins set is handsomely bound in tanned calf stamped in a lozenge-shaped mesh pattern. The impression is one of restrained elegance, and as David Pearson says, is typical of an early nineteenth century binding that relies for effect as much on the texture of the leather as on the tooling.²⁶

²⁵ Pat Rogers, 'Book Dedications in Britain 1700-1799: A preliminary survey', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 16.2 (1993), 213-233 (p.231).

²⁶ David Pearson, *English Bookbinding Styles* (The British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2005), p. 86.

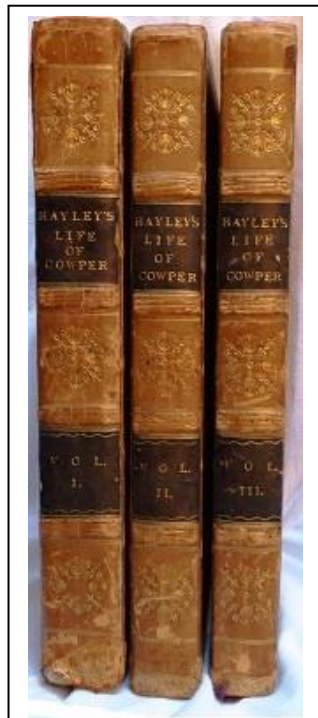


Figure 3: Details of the binding of 'Mr Higgins's Hayley'

The George III copy in the British Library is also bound in calf with a similar lozenge mesh pattern, but bears a heavy embossed monogram with a crown on its front cover.

The more elaborate elements of the Higgins binding are reserved for the spine. Each has four raised bands that separate the spine into compartments, a coloured headband in red, white and blue, and a brown ribbon marker. The tooled black leather label reads 'Hayley's Life of Cowper'. There is no binder's ticket to help determine the name of the binder, and probably no way of determining whether the books were bound locally or in London. Individual binder's work can occasionally be determined from the tools used for the gilt decoration, but the rosettes and fillet decorations used on the Higgins copies do not match any of the

examples provided in, for example, David Pearson's book on English bookbinding styles. It was once thought that country binders would pass on their work to established binders in London or the nearest town of importance but G. D. Hobson's book on English bindings, quoted by Charles Ramsden, lists thirty places outside London where gilt binding was carried out between 1770 and 1830. Hobson suggested that this was the heyday of English provincial binding so perhaps the Higgins copy was bound locally.²⁷

Inside the covers there are marbled paper pastedowns, a feature common to the early editions, although the marbling is different in each case. All three Higgins volumes have a Turvey Abbey bookplate pasted inside the front cover, dated 1874 and probably added sixty or seventy years after the books were bound. The bookplate bears a sketch of Turvey Abbey, the date, and the name of John Higgins's son, Charles Longuet Higgins (1806-1885). Above the sketch is the family motto *Nisi Dominus* and the initials CLH, for Charles Longuet Higgins, and HEH, presumably for his wife Helen Eliza. Helen was the daughter of the antiquary and book-collector Thomas Burgon of the British Museum; it was perhaps Helen whose interests ran to sorting the books at Turvey Abbey and adding bookplates.²⁸

²⁷ Charles Ramsden, *Bookbinders of the United Kingdom (Outside London) 1780-1840* (Privately printed, 1954), p. x.

²⁸ Burgon's biographical details at

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?bioId=97325

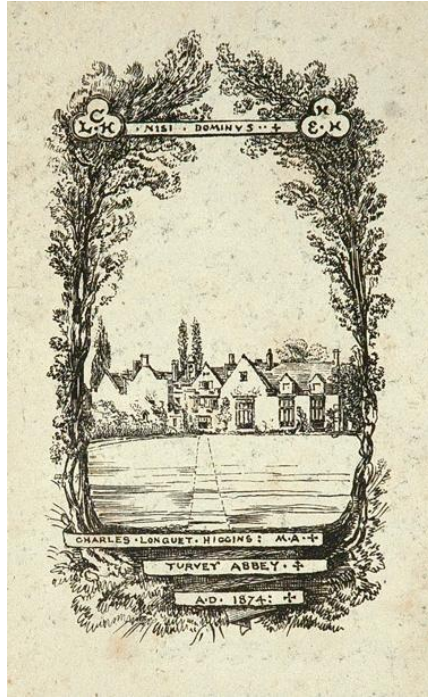


Figure 4: the Turvey Abbey bookplate.

The house remained in the family's ownership until the 1950s. In 1954 'a selection from the library at Turvey Abbey' was sent to the salerooms at Messrs. Hodgson & Co.²⁹ An annotated catalogue survives at the British Library; there were some fine books included, not least a folio set of Erasmus's *Opera Omnia* in eleven volumes from Lyons, 1703-6, and the plates to Cook's Second Voyage in a folio volume. But there was no mention in this catalogue of the extra-illustrated *Life of Cowper*. Its whereabouts between 1874 and 2005, the date of its acquisition by the Cowper Museum, remain undocumented.

²⁹ *A catalogue of fine and rare books including the property of Sir W. W. Greg, a selection from the library at Turvey Abbey, Beds., of the Rev. H. Hugh Longuet Higgins, OBE, M.C. (etc.)* (sold by auction by Messrs. Hodgson & Co at their rooms, No,115 Chancery Lane ... on Thursday, February 18th,1954).

John Higgins was a young man in his mid-twenties when he inherited Turvey Abbey in 1792. The property had been bought just a few years earlier in 1786, by his uncle Charles Higgins, a successful London grocer who had served as Sheriff of London that same year.³⁰ It was an old and probably inconvenient house set in farmland on the banks of the River Ouse. Despite its name it had no ecclesiastical links. Higgins's own drawings of the house in his commonplace book show that he altered it considerably (see figures 8 and 9 on page 31).³¹ According to *Magna Britannia*, the county history compiled by Daniel and Samuel Lysons, a turnpike road passed through Turvey from Bedford to Olney, 'of late much out of repair'.³² It was John Higgins himself who supplied the Lysons with local information.³³

Some of John Higgins' correspondence survives in the Record Office in Bedford. Letters to John suggest that he enjoyed the leisurely pursuits of hunting and fishing, but that he had a serious side also, collecting books, church-going, and regularly visiting London to keep an eye on the family business. Not long after John inherited his new house, an acquaintance Mr Hall of Bartlow provided some sensible advice on the use of his time:

I suppose if you think of continuing at Turvey and are likely to live much alone, that you will turn your thoughts to the best method of making your time pass pleasantly and profitably, and

³⁰ G. F. W. Munby, *Former Days at Turvey* (London: James Nisbet, 1908), p. 25.

³¹ *The Book of Turvey Abbey*, facsimile copy of John Higgins's commonplace book 1830-1846, fols.52 and 62, held by the Monastery of Christ our Saviour at Turvey)..

³² Daniel and Samuel Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, Bedfordshire, 1806 (republished 1978 by EP Publishing).

³³ Daniel Lysons to John Higgins, 1 January 1803, Beds & Luton Archives & Records Service, HG12/4/113.

under this impression may be tempted to increase your stock of books – in which case if you have not them already let me advise you to buy Paley’s Moral Philosophy in 2 vols, which you will find excellent... if you do incline to read at all, let me advise you to do it on a settled plan.³⁴

Mr Buchanan , a clergyman from the nearby parish of Ravenstone, searched out reviews for him, writing to John Higgins in February 1796:

Mr Burke’s lately published letter to Arthur Young, on the Case of labourers in husbandry, I think, will be read very generally on account of the celebrity of the Writer; it is a small thing. If you happen to call in at the shop of Cadell & Davies and ask to see Dr Armstrong’s poem on ‘Health’ and Dr Akenside’s poem on ‘The Pleasures of the Imagination’; with preface by Dr Aikin and Mrs Barbauld, I would not insure your not buying them both; as they are elegantly printed, and you are an Encourager of that Art.³⁵

As a country gentleman and book collector, John Higgins would surely have wanted a library. A plan of the house in his commonplace book from 1830 refers a library room, which he improved with a new window, (Figure 9 on page 31). Such a room would have been a focal point for visitors and a place where family and friends could admire new books and perhaps even set about the fashionable pastime of extra-illustration. To quote Lucy Peltz, ‘by the end of the eighteenth century a gentleman’s library was not just a haven of retirement, it was also conceived as a site of refined leisure and mixed sociability; one where books were objects of fashionable consumption’.³⁶

³⁴ J. Hall to John Higgins, 3 November 1794, HG12/4/38.

³⁵ John Buchanan, Ravenstone Vicarage to John Higgins, 3 February 1798, HG12/4/8.

³⁶ Peltz, p.37.

In 1799 Higgins set about extending his house, perhaps with marriage in mind. This may have been his opportunity to create for himself just such a space as Lucy Peltz described. Higgins's man of affairs George Varnham wrote to him from London that he would 'receive your dividend at the first opportunity, and send the money, as you have so many bricklayers, carpenters, masons etc, etc, etc at work'.³⁷ Shortly afterwards John Higgins married Teresa Longuet of Bath.

John Higgins retained his interest in his old friend and neighbour William Cowper. Some time in 1802 he sent Cowper's great-nephew, Cousin Johnny from Norfolk, a manuscript of Cowper's unpublished comic poem known as 'The needless alarm'. Johnny was asked to forward this to Hayley. Higgins knew that Hayley was looking for material about Cowper, but evidently Hayley was too distant an acquaintance for Higgins to approach him direct. Johnny was dilatory in responding; but eventually returned the poem, enclosed in a letter dated 14 December 1802. He wrote that he had already seen in Hayley's manuscript the very verse that Higgins had sent him. Johnny described the new work, and evidently assumed that Higgins would be familiar with the material:

...his Life of Cowper, which by the way, I am happy to inform you will be ready for Publication by New Year's Day, as I learn by a letter just received from Mr H. It will be a very interesting work, composed in 2 Volumes 4to and chiefly consisting of our dear Friend's Letters to a variety of persons. It will be decorated with a head of Mr C by Romney (poor Romney, who is just dead, as you have probably seen by the Papers), engraved by Blake, and with Blake's engraving also of Lawrence's admirable sketch. There will also be a Head of Mr Cowper's mother, by the same engraver, and perhaps a vignette or two of some sort. Such was the intention of Mr H when I left him ...³⁸.

³⁷ George Varnham to John Higgins, 6 June 1799, HG12/4/127.

³⁸ John Johnson to John Higgins, 14 December 1802, HG12/4/101.

Hayley's *Life of Cowper* was on sale a month later, in January 1803. It was listed, without a price, in *The Monthly Register, Philosophical and Miscellaneous Intelligence* for January 1803 as '2 vols. 4to'.³⁹ Norma Russell describes an advertisement in the *Monthly Literary Advertiser* for 10 January 1803, offering the book, 'lately published', at £3. 13. 6. in boards for the large paper copy (roy. 4°), and £2. 12. 6 in boards for ordinary paper (demy 4°).⁴⁰ Mr Higgins acquired a demy quarto copy, at a price perhaps more suited to a country gentleman's pocket. He may have bought the volumes direct from Joseph Johnson's bookshop in London, or perhaps from Bedford, a town that boasted several bookshops and binders.⁴¹

Owners of *The Life of Cowper* faced a dilemma as regards the binding; those who had their new copies bound in 1803 would have had to return to the binder when the third volume appeared the next year. When Hayley issued his Supplementary Pages in 1806 some owners bound these as a separate volume. Mr Higgins does not seem to have acquired the Supplementary Pages; with a wife and new-born son Charles Longuet he doubtless had other interests.

The engravings to *The Life of Cowper*, commissioned by Hayley from William Blake and printed in Blake's workshop at Felpham, were supplied loose. According to the *Directions to the Binder*, thoughtfully provided by Joseph

³⁹ "LITERARY, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND MISCELLANEOUS INTELLIGENCE." The Monthly register and encyclopedian magazine, January 1803: <http://0-search.proquest.com/catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/docview/3745644/2A9FAF4F2C94632PQ/4?accountid=14565>, accessed 24/8/2015.

⁴⁰ Russell, p. 251, (*Monthly Literary Advertiser* otherwise recorded as beginning in 1805).

⁴¹ Ramsden, p. 12.

Seagrave at the end of the Contents list in Volume I, there were to be just three engravings. The first, a portrait after Romney, was to be used as frontispiece to Volume I. A portrait after Lawrence served as frontispiece to Volume II, and the third engraving, a portrait of Cowper's mother, was to face page 4 of Volume I.

After the Contents list was printed, Hayley commissioned three more engravings. These included two pictures of Flaxman's monument to Cowper and the chapel where it stood at East Dereham, and 'Motto on a Clock', the only original design by Blake in the book. Some of the first edition copies lack the East Dereham pictures completely.

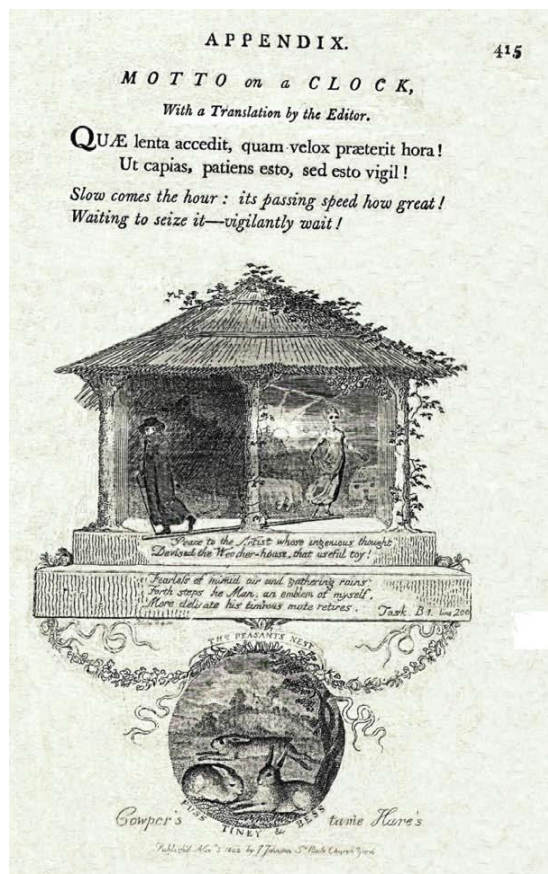


Figure 5: Blake's only original illustration for *The Life of Cowper*

The apparent success of the publication of *The Life of Cowper* inspired other publishers to follow suit. Early in 1803 an Irish hack-writer John Corry rushed out a much-abbreviated Life of Cowper, based on Hayley's work and priced at 'One Shilling'; various other plagiaristic works from London booksellers followed the same year.⁴² In May 1803, the booksellers Vernor and Hood, already known for an ambitious work on *The Beauties of England and Wales*, issued a set of engravings devoted to the locality where Cowper lived and wrote. Its full title was COWPER ILLUSTRATED BY A SERIES OF VIEWS IN OR NEAR THE PARK OF WESTON-UNDERWOOD. The plates were drawn and engraved by James Sargant Storer and John Greig. The new work was published in 1803 in a variety of sizes of paper, in quarto at one guinea, in royal octavo at 10s 6d. The images were of similar size regardless of the size of sheet.⁴³ Vernor and Hood also issued a shorter version, in demy and royal quarto, but without the sketch of the poet's life that had accompanied the original. Russell suggests that this issue was particularly intended for owners of Hayley's *Life of Cowper*.⁴⁴

There were twelve plates in the original issue, plus the engraved title page showing Cowper's summerhouse. All thirteen views are bound into Volume 1 of Mr Higgins's copy of the *Life of Cowper* and carefully placed adjacent to the most relevant pages. Thus James Storer's picture of the summerhouse (Figure 5 on the next page), from the engraved title page of *Cowper, Illustrated*, is placed facing the text of Cowper's letter of 25 June 1785 in which he describes his hut

⁴² Russell, pp. 256-258.

⁴³ Russell, p. 268.

⁴⁴ Russell, p. 269.

at the end of his garden in Olney: ‘I write in a nook I call my Boudoir. It is a summer-house not much bigger than a sedan-chair’.



Figure 6: Title page of *Cowper, Illustrated*, used as an extra-illustration

The publishers of *Cowper, Illustrated* anticipated that the plates would be used to illustrate *The Life of Cowper*. They arranged for a review in the June 1803 issue of *The Monthly Mirror*, a periodical which they conveniently owned. The reviewer noted, ‘These prints are exceedingly well-executed ... though in one or two instances perhaps a more judicious choice of subject might have been made’.⁴⁵ The concluding lines of the review ran as follows:

⁴⁵ *The Monthly Mirror, reflecting Men and Manners*, XV, pp .392-395. This periodical ‘printed for the proprietors and Published by Vernor and Hood in the Poultry’ ran for 22 issues between 1795 and 1806.

Every possessor of the Works of Cowper will undoubtedly become a purchaser of this publication, as the former cannot be considered complete without having this illustration as an addendum.

As topographical publishers, Vernor and Hood were doubtless aware of the popularity among the leisured classes for extra-illustration, also called ‘Grangerising’, after the Rev. James Granger. In 1769 Granger’s new *Biographical History of England ... adapted to a Methodical Catalogue of Engraved British Heads* fuelled a mania for collecting engraved portraits to be bound into printed books. The fashion reached its height towards the end of the eighteenth century; increasingly topographical works and literary texts were given the same treatment.⁴⁶

The process was delicate and could involve taking a book apart at the binding, cutting frames within the pages, pasting extra sheets into these frames and then rebinding the book. The binder of ‘Mr Higgins’s Hayley’ had a simpler method; he, or she, took apart some of the gatherings to allow the insertion of a narrow leaf of stiff paper, of the same height as the original leaves of the volume. The *Cowper, Illustrated* engravings were then pasted along the long edge of the inserted paper. The relevance to Hayley’s text was paramount in deciding the positioning of the engraving; it would have been easiest to insert the additional leaf of stiff paper between gatherings, but only two of the engravings seem to have been positioned in this way. In several cases the engraving is placed within the centre of the gathering.

⁴⁶ Robert R. Wark, ‘The gentle pastime of extra-illustrating books’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 1993, 56 (2), p.160.

All the extra illustrations in the Higgins copy of *The Life of Cowper* appear in the first volume. Volume II contains four of the six Blake engravings commissioned by Hayley. Volume III has no illustrations. The consistency of the binding of the three volumes of the set suggests that they were bound at the same time, and thus after the publication of Volume III in 1804. It seems likely that John Higgins acquired the first two volumes and the Blake engravings soon after they were published in 1803, together with his set of views from *Cowper Illustrated*. He was then keen to commemorate his old family connections with Cowper by adding his pen and ink drawings of Weston Underwood and the silhouette of Cowper that he had originally drawn a decade earlier.

Higgins's silhouette, inscribed 'Cowper reduced from a profile sketch drawn in 1791 by J.H.' was inserted as an extra frontispiece. The original may have hung in Cowper's study.⁴⁷ Lady Hesketh, who disliked it, wrote to Cousin Johnny in 1800 to say that she had seen the image in a new book called 'Publick Characters':

...in a Sheet where all the heads of the partys thus celebrated appeared I descried one that I took at first for a Blackmoor but found on inspection that it was a Reduced Copy of that horrid Likeness taken by young Higgens, Samuel and I, on black paper from a Shade ...In the book I found nothing to displeas or vex me so I let the Author sleep in a whole Skin ...⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Russell, p. 286.

⁴⁸ Bodham-Johnson 28 May 1800, p. 107.

Similar care to match the illustration with the text was taken with one of Higgins's drawings of Weston Underwood. The drawing of Cowper's house in Weston faces a letter in which Cowper recounts the Throckmorton family's offer to lease the house to him. The other five drawings by Higgins were all views of the Old Hall at Weston, where Higgins grew up and met Cowper, but were not immediately relevant to the text.

The insertion of the drawings is unsatisfactory; they appear to be bound into the book block, but because the paper size for the drawings was larger than the size of the text pages the drawings were folded, as in Figure 6. In other more elaborate extra-illustrated books the pages of text were remounted on larger sheets.⁴⁹



Figure 7: an 'extra-illustration', folded pen and ink drawing of Cowper's house.

⁴⁹ Wark, p.151..

Hayley's *Life of Cowper* evidently lent itself to extra-illustration. The Victoria University Library in Toronto holds an extra-illustrated copy of the 1803 edition, which used the same Storer and Greig plates. Tantalisingly the catalogue entry reports that 'many other illustrations cut from various other works published around the same time are pasted on leaves of stiff paper with inset borders and interspersed throughout the three volumes'.⁵⁰

Perhaps the most remarkable of the extra-illustrated copies of Hayley's *Life of Cowper* is the four-volume set of the 1806, edition that belonged to William Upcott (1779-1845), and is now owned by Princeton University Library.⁵¹

Upcott was a diligent collector of manuscripts and a 'grangeriser'. Starting in 1808, he added hundreds of illustrations not only to the *Life* but also to Cowper's collected *Poems* and other Cowper titles.⁵² The Upcott *Life of Cowper* contains several hundred additional portraits, views and original letters and autographs. Upcott even tracked down Hayley's own autograph dedication of the book, 'to the Spirit of his dear departed Friend', dated 3 January 1803, and a recipe for gingerbread in the hand of Cowper's companion Mrs Unwin. This he felt sufficiently important to place opposite the title page to the fourth volume.

⁵⁰ Victoria University Library, Bentley Collection, URL , <http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/special/bentley/catalogue/609-822.html> .

⁵¹ Charles Ryskamp, 'William Cowper and his Circle, A Study of the Hannay Collection', *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 24.1 (1962), pp. 3-26.

⁵² Department of Special Collections, Princeton: <http://rbsc.princeton.edu/topics/extra-illustrated-books>.

Missing from Upcott's version of *The Life of Cowper* are the Storer and Greig engravings incorporated in 'Mr Higgins's Hayley'. Upcott had already used these in his copy of Cowper's *Collected Poems*.

John Higgins's project to extra-illustrate *Life of Cowper* was far more modest than Upcott's. He did not include letters and autographs that he owned, such as the poem that he had asked Johnny Johnson to send to Hayley, or others that he reportedly gave to friends.⁵³ But his enterprise does illustrate what Lucy Peltz, in her study of extra-illustration in Walpole's circle, described as an activity symbolic of 'the conspicuous consumption of leisure' requiring the genteel investment of time and leisure in the production of material objects.⁵⁴

'Mr Higgins's Hayley' demonstrates that the interest in extra-illustration extended to the provincial gentry and their social circle. It is evidence too that the Higgins family and their social equals appreciated literary biography as Hayley presented it. They took pleasure in Cowper's letters and the rediscovered poems, and particularly valued the book as a material demonstration of John Higgins's association with the celebrated poet.

⁵³ Cowper and Newton Museum, Charles Longuet Higgins to an unknown correspondent, 27 October 1866, OLNCN:312.

⁵⁴ Peltz, p. 36.

Figure 8: Turvey Abbey in 1781, with an account in John Higgins's hand of his first sight of the house. From John Higgins's commonplace book, fol. 52.

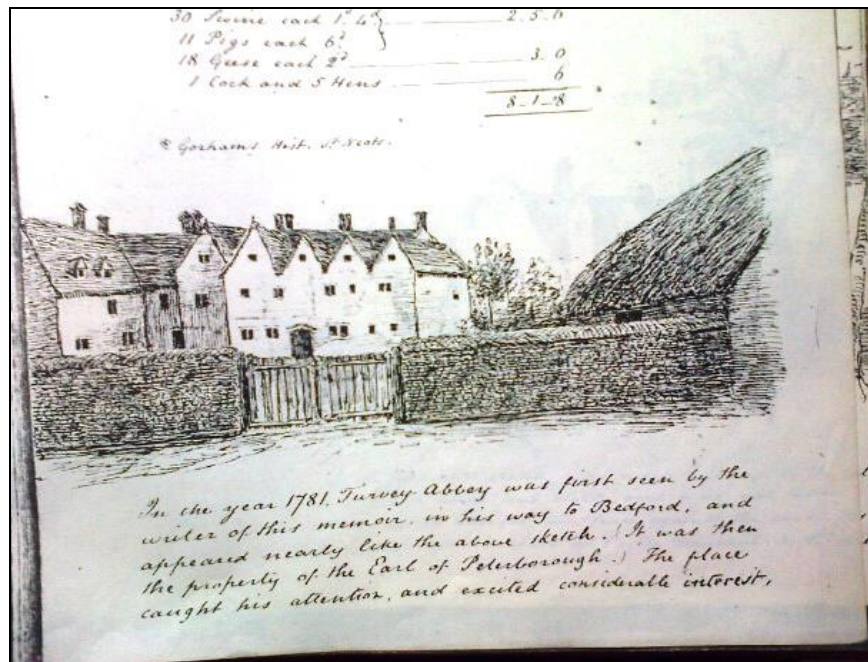
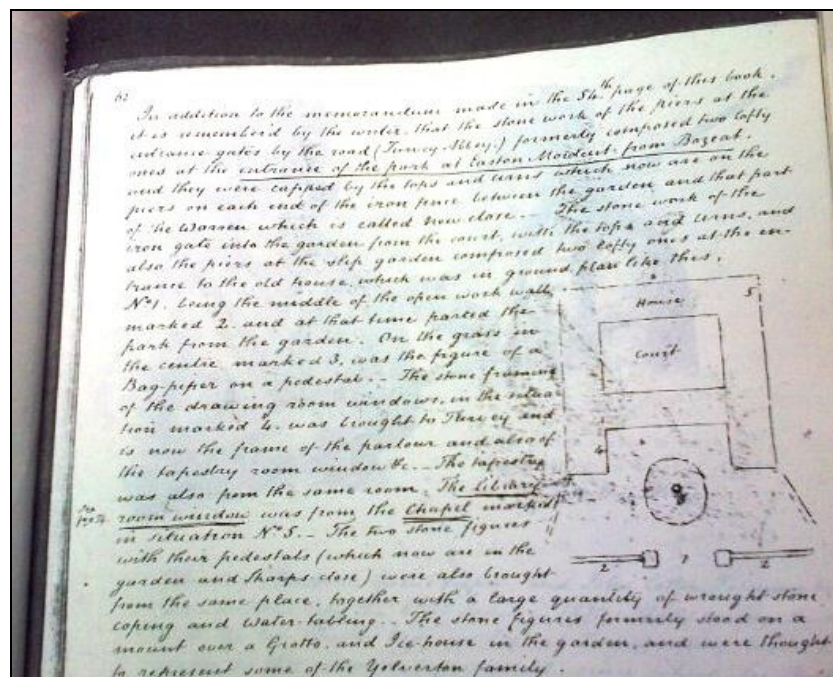


Figure 9: plan of Turvey Abbey c. 1830, indicating the changes made by John Higgins. The description refers to 'the library room window' From John Higgins's commonplace book, fol. 62.



CHAPTER TWO

This chapter records William Hayley's progress in writing *The Life of Cowper*, from the time of William Cowper's death in May 1800 to the completion of the first two printed volumes in December 1802. It considers the literary exemplars that Hayley would have had in mind when he set to work on the biography. The chapter also describes Hayley's initial dealings with his publisher Joseph Johnson and his printer, and also with Cowper's relatives who had inherited Cowper's papers.

Hayley was able to draw on some of the finest examples of biographical literature from Britain and beyond from his own library. Biographies and collections of letters represented between five and ten per cent of all the books published towards the end of the eighteenth century.⁵⁵ Goodhugh's *English Gentleman's Library Manual* advised that biography was one of the categories of books that every private library should have, alongside history and theology, English literature, translations, voyages, travels and the physical sciences, and 'lounging books'.⁵⁶

At least until the success of *The Life of Cowper*, Hayley was not a wealthy man. He prized frugality, and very possibly ploughed back any money that he earned from his writing into his book collection. He married twice but neither bride

⁵⁵ Michael F. Suarez, 'Towards a bibliometric analysis of the surviving record, 1701-1800', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain 1695-1830*, p. 46.

⁵⁶ Goodhugh, p. ix. His lounging books, 'books that one takes up in the gout, low spirits, ennui, or when one is waiting for company', listed at p. 306.

brought him a dowry and neither marriage lasted. His *Memoirs*, published posthumously, record a series of financial disappointments and literary failures. In a letter dated 1784, he regretfully recorded the death of an elderly relative and his failure to leave an inheritance for the poet: 'I am inclined to think it much for the best that I have not been surprised by an unexpected legacy of two or three thousand pounds ... I might perhaps have thrown away my pen'.⁵⁷

Hayley was left a house at Eartham in Sussex when his father died. He moved there from London in 1774, aged twenty-nine.⁵⁸ In 1780, finding that his books on the ground floor were suffering from damp, he built a library, decorated for him by the sculptor Flaxman.⁵⁹ It was an impressive space; when William Cowper visited Eartham in 1792 accompanied by his Cousin Johnny, the awed Johnny wrote home to his sister:

... such a place was never seen for elegance and noble scenery. Mr Hayley's grounds are nearly a mile round, and beautifully interspersed with rural grottoes, ivy seats and imitative Towers... Here is a noble Library – the finest in the country – the room is 30 ft. long and 14ft. high, with a suitable breadth which I have forgotten but I think it is somewhere about 24ft. broad...⁶⁰

In 1797, possibly in an attempt to economise, Hayley rented out Eartham and built himself a small seaside villa at Felpham, known as the Turret. It was

⁵⁷ *Memoirs*, I, p. 332.

⁵⁸ Tracey Carr, 'Hayley at Eartham', in *William Hayley (1745-1820), Poet, Biographer and Libertarian: A Reassessment*, ed. by Paul Foster (University of Chichester, 2013), pp. 57-75.

⁵⁹ *Memoirs*, I, p. 320.

⁶⁰ 19 August 1792, Bodham Johnson, p. 19.

notable for the large amount of space dedicated to Hayley's books.⁶¹ William Blake provided a series of portraits of authors for the main library on the first floor. William Godwin visited the house in 1811 and described the house as 'quite a toy', with splendid books and bindings in every room of the house.⁶²

Long before Hayley embarked on *The Life of Cowper* he experimented with the writing of biography, no doubt consulting books from his library as he worked. One of his earliest prose works was a dialogue, in which he argued the respective merits of Samuel Johnson and the letter-writer Lord Chesterfield.⁶³ He gained experience in handling a writer's private papers when he helped Lord Sheffield with the posthumous *Life* of Edmund Gibbon in 1794, a work assembled from various overlapping autobiographical memoirs and from Gibbon's correspondence.⁶⁴ Sheffield's introduction to this work reflects his concerns that, as a close friend of Gibbon, he must guard against partiality, and yet at the same time do justice to his subject by removing any potentially indiscreet or compromising material:

Being aware how disgracefully Authors of Eminence have often been treated, by an indiscreet posthumous publication of fragments and careless effusions; when I had selected those Papers which to myself appeared the fittest for public eye, I consulted some of our common friends, anxious with myself

⁶¹ G. L. Conran, *William Blake's Heads of the Poets for Turret House the Residence of William Hayley* (Manchester City Art Gallery, 1990), p. 8.

⁶² Conran, pp. 9-10.

⁶³ *Anecdotes of Philip, late Earl of Chesterfield and Dr Johnson...., by a student at Cambridge* [ie Hayley] (London: A. Cleugh, 1800).

⁶⁴ *Memoirs*, I, p. 461.

for Mr Gibbon's fame, and fully competent, from their judgement, to protect it.⁶⁵

Hayley was one of those friends consulted, and he presumably helped in the process of sifting and editing material to project a favourable image. The title page of Sheffield's book described it as 'illustrated from his [Gibbon's] Letters, with occasional notes and narrative'. This was the form that Hayley's *Life of Cowper* was also to take. Sheffield concluded his introduction by excusing the inclusion of material that Gibbon left unfinished, 'yet, the compositions though unfinished are so excellent, that they may justly entitle my Friend to appear as his own Biographer'.

Hayley's first full-length literary biography was a *Life of Milton*, a commission from the bookseller John Boydell. It was this book that brought Hayley into contact with William Cowper in 1792, as Cowper had been separately commissioned by Joseph Johnson to edit Milton's poetry for what might have become a rival edition.⁶⁶

The contents of Hayley's library suggest that his interest in biography ranged more widely than the purely literary. There is of course no proof that Hayley was familiar with the contents of all the books in his library, but in styling himself 'Hermit' he acknowledged his preference for a solitary life centred on his books.

Hayley's book collection was auctioned after his death in 1820 to help pay his

⁶⁵ *Miscellaneous Works of Edmund Gibbon Esq., with Memoirs of his Life and Writings*, 3 vols (London: Printed for A. Strahan, and T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1796), I, p. iii.

⁶⁶ Russell, pp. 175-178.

debts. The books were carefully catalogued and sold off in 2649 lots over thirteen days at Mr Evans's house at 93 Pall Mall, starting on Tuesday 13 February 1821.⁶⁷

A.N. Munby described the contents as 'representative of a large class of libraries of the period, the country house collections of educated men of means with literary and artistic tastes, strong in classical and Italian literature';⁶⁸ the collection was also strong in biography. There were copious biographical dictionaries and also individual Lives, of statesmen and monarchs, military leaders, poets and authors. Should Hayley ever have needed to justify the quantity of biographical writing in his library, he had only to turn to his two quarto volumes of Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (cat. 375), to read that 'Biography, or the Writing of Lives, is a very useful kind of Composition; less formal and stately than History, but to the bulk of Readers, perhaps, no less instructive'.⁶⁹

One of the lots highlighted in the introduction to the sale catalogue was Alexander Chalmers' *Biographical Dictionary* in 32 octavo volumes in boards; (item 267 in the catalogue). Isobel Rivers has described biographical dictionaries as 'an important, influential and increasingly popular genre in eighteenth century

⁶⁷ A. N. Munby, (ed.), *Sale Catalogues of the Libraries of Eminent Persons*, 12 vols (London : Mansell : Sotheby Parke-Burnet, 1971-1975), Poets and Men of Letters, II, pp. 83-171.

⁶⁸ Munby, p. 83.

⁶⁹ Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 5th edn (London 1793), III, p. 54.

England', and one under-explored by historians.⁷⁰ Hayley's extensive collection illustrates just how many of these there were. They included eight octavo volumes of the *British Plutarch*, 1791, (cat.118) and twelve volumes of the *Biographical Dictionary*, 1784, (cat.119). In grander folio format Hayley owned both the original 1747 edition of the *Biographica Britannica* in seven volumes, (cat. 218), and the second edition edited by Kippis, 1778 onwards (cat. 219).

Among the literary biographies in the sale were four volumes of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, 1791, that previously belonged to William Cowper (cat. 1114), Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, two volumes in quarto, 1791 (cat. 378), and Gray's *Poems and Letters*, by Mason, 1775 (cat. 1237). These titles are significant because they are seen now as stepping-stones in the evolution of the increasingly fashionable study of literary biography. And they may have influenced Hayley's decisions on how best to prepare the life of his friend Cowper.

As educated eighteenth century readers would have known, the art of biography went back to ancient times, to Plutarch and to Suetonius.⁷¹ Boswell had approvingly quoted Plutarch in his introduction to the *Life of Johnson* on 'the value of apparent trifles in a man's action or conversation for the illumination of his character'.⁷² Samuel Johnson himself experimented with biography; his essay on his friend Richard Savage, described by the biographer Richard Holmes as

⁷⁰ Isobel Rivers, 'Biographical Dictionaries and their uses from Bayle to Chalmers', in *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. by Isobel Rivers (Continuum: London, 2001), pp. 135-169 (p. 137).

⁷¹ G. W. Bowerstock, 'Suetonius in the Eighteenth Century', in *Biography in the 18th Century*, ed. by J. D. Browning (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980), pp. 28-42 (p. 42).

⁷² James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson LL.D.*, 4 vols (London: J. Richardson and others, 1823), I, p. 7.

‘overtly a model of judicious impartiality’, was first printed in 1744.⁷³ It was re-issued as one of Johnson’s *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, originally planned to accompany a multi-volume edition of their works.

Johnson adopted a tripartite structure for most of the *Lives*, consisting of a chronological sequence of facts and dates of publications, a middle section describing the poet’s character, and finally a critical analysis of the poet’s writings. This was the structure that Hayley borrowed for *The Life of Cowper*, but he perhaps owed more to his reading of William Mason’s *Memoirs of Thomas Gray*, 1775, than to Johnson.

Mason’s work was written as an introduction to Gray’s poems. Mason had inherited Gray’s papers when Gray died in 1771. His method was innovative; he assembled heavily-edited versions of the letters in chronological order, and provided brief editorial bridges between them. In his Preface, Mason wrote ‘Mr Gray will become his own biographer’.⁷⁴ This was the form of words also borrowed by Lord Sheffield for his *Life of Gibbon*, and was evidently a quality to be prized. Although Mason was not the first biographer to incorporate a subject’s letters, he has been said to be the first to include such a quantity of correspondence.⁷⁵ Hayley was to take Mason’s method to extremes in terms of quantity.

⁷³ Richard Holmes, ‘Inventing the Truth’, in *The Art of Literary Biography* ed. by John Batchelor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.22.

⁷⁴ Quoted by Robert Halsband, ‘The Penury of English Biography before Samuel Johnson’, in *Biography in the 18th Century*, (see Bowerstock, above), p. 123.

⁷⁵ Darcy, p. 63.

Hayley also owned a four-volume set of *Burns's Works*, prefaced by a *Life* written by James Currie in 1801 (cat. 146). Burns's celebrity had reached a peak after the publication of his *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* in 1786. After his death in 1798, his admirers tried in vain to raise a subscription for his impoverished family. Frustrated, they then decided on a posthumous biography. Currie, an Edinburgh-trained physician and admirer of Burns' poetry, was persuaded to take on the task of biographer. When Burns's manuscripts were shipped to him from Edinburgh, he wrote with astonishment, 'Instead of finding, as I expected, a selection of his papers with such annotations as might clear up any obscurities, of papers perused and approved by his friends as fit for publication, I received the complete sweepings of his drawers and of his desk'.⁷⁶ Currie did not shrink from removing offending passages from Burns's letters and cutting and rewording them.⁷⁷

Hayley was impressed by Currie's *Life of Burns*, calling Currie 'an ingenious, eloquent and affectionate biographer'.⁷⁸ The pruning and rewriting of passages in Burns's letters was not a matter of concern. Hayley's share of the work on the *Life of Gibbon* had already made him aware of the need to remove indiscreet material. He may have seen it as part of the function of a literary biographer to sanitise a writer's life. Marriage and sexual relationships lay outside the remit of the eighteenth century biographer, although it is notable that Hayley owned a copy of William Godwin's 'Memoirs of his Wife', (cat. 884). This was a work

⁷⁶ *Memoir of the Life of James Currie*, 1831, p.271, quoted in Ian Hamilton, *Keepers of the Flame: Literary Estates and the Rise of Biography* (Hutchinson, 1992), pp. 85-108 (p. 94).

⁷⁷ Hamilton, p. 96.

⁷⁸ *Memoirs*, I, p. 8.

that shocked contemporaries and laid bare Mary Wollstonecraft's love affairs and suicide attempts. Hayley's view of the book went unrecorded. His *Life of Cowper* certainly avoided any mention of parallel events in Cowper's life, such as Cowper's suicide attempts and his questionable relationship with Mary Unwin. As regards Cowper's mental infirmity, Hayley declared it the duty of the biographer to suppress discussion of such issues:

The misfortune of mental derangement is a topic of such awful delicacy, that I consider it the duty of a biographer rather to sink in tender silence, than to proclaim...the minute particulars of a calamity to which all human beings are exposed.⁷⁹

To write Cowper's biography Hayley had to cajole Cowper's family and friends into providing material about Cowper's life from his earliest years to 1792, when Hayley first met him. Unlike James Currie, who had access to all of Burns's papers and was at liberty to impose his own judgements on Burns's character, Hayley had only his own letters from Cowper and Johnny to draw on, and he was answerable to Cowper's cousin Lady Hesketh, who was to waver between enthusiasm and hostility.

Hayley had a further problem in trying, and failing, to keep a distance from his subject. His main source would be the letters that he exchanged with Cowper, which were full of mutual congratulation. In his dedication of his work to Earl Cowper, Hayley was self-deprecating:

⁷⁹ *Life of Cowper*, I, p. 26.

‘I had resolved at first to make no inconsiderable sacrifice; and to suppress in his letters every particle of praise bestowed upon me. I found it impossible to do so without injuring the tender and generous spirit of my friend.’⁸⁰

According to Hayley’s published *Memoirs*, his diary note for 23 January 1801 read ‘Began Memoirs of Cowper – advanced very little, being not well’. He provided few details about the book in the *Memoirs*. What limited information there is, was mainly provided by Cowper’s Cousin Johnny, who edited the *Memoirs* for publication after Hayley’s death and added the letters that Hayley had sent him when he was working on the *Life*.

Cowper died on 25 April 1800. As early as 7 August 1800, Hayley was writing to Johnny in search of materials, ‘Pray form for me a slight *outline of annals*, comprehending the year of his birth, and of the most striking events in his singularly sequestered life’.⁸¹ In the same month he wrote to Lady Hesketh to assure her that he would ‘prove a proper guardian of his [Cowper’s] reputation. I can literally say, with the strictest truth, that his reputation is dearer to me than my own; and in whatever shape I may write his memoirs, I shall zealously wish not to insert in them a syllable of which, I could imagine, his tender and pure spirit might disapprove’.⁸²

He was still considering how to present the memoir. The same letter to Johnny of 7 August 1800 suggests that he was thinking in terms of a biographical preface to

⁸⁰ *Life of Cowper*, I, p. 5.

⁸¹ Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge, Hayley papers, Box XXVIII.

⁸² *Memoirs*, II, p. 20.

a new edition of Cowper's *Collected Poems*, to be edited by Johnny and published by Joseph Johnson the bookseller:

I hope there may appear, by the liberality of yr namesake the Bookseller, a very handsome Edition of Cowper's Collected Works. Of that Edition, I shall continue to recommend you most strenuously as the becoming Editor, and I will contribute to it the best Memoirs I can form, of our inestimable Friend, either succinct or copious, according to the deliberate Desire of you two very intelligent, feeling and meritorious Relations of the Deceased.⁸³

Lady Hesketh, having committed herself to Hayley as biographer, then tried to backtrack. In September, in another letter to Lady Hesketh, he noted her 'timidity concerning the manuscripts of their departed friend' and sought a meeting in London at the end of October. Lady Hesketh meanwhile was writing to Johnny to instruct him to limit his researches on Hayley's behalf, particularly with reference to Mrs Powley, Mrs Unwin's daughter. Lady Hesketh was extremely concerned that Mrs Powley's testimony would encourage Hayley to delve into private matters unsuitable for the biography. On 13 November 1800 Cousin Johnny copied to Hayley a letter he had just received from Lady Hesketh, in which she warned that Hayley must restrict his material to a general outline of Cowper's character and a catalogue of his works:

I do not imagine you will extract anything from Mrs Powley that will be any use to our dear friend's kind Biographer. That she may mention things which I should be extremely sorry to see in Print I can easily believe and it is in truth and always has been that Mr Hayley should confine himself to the general *Outline* (word indistinct) of our beloved friend's Character and to a

⁸³ Hayley papers, Box XXVIII.

catalogue of his works rather than make a Novel of it by inserting any Facts, either real or suppressed, that concern only his private history...⁸⁴

Somehow Hayley managed to persuade Lady Hesketh that the biography should be extended to include the letters. He had promised her that he would protect Cowper's reputation; he must have known that this would involve censoring and rewriting parts of his subject's letters, just as the biographers Mason and Currie had done before him.

By early 1801 Hayley had settled on a quarto format for the work. That was the format in which Boswell's *Life of Johnson* first appeared in 1791. Boswell admitted his initial choice had been for a folio edition but he was dissuaded.⁸⁵

Hayley's ambitions may have been similarly grandiose; he determined on the impressive illustrations for the book despite the increase in price this entailed.⁸⁶

At Hayley's suggestion William Blake and his wife had moved to a cottage in Felpham in September 1800, and the engravings for *The Life of Cowper* were one of several planned collaborations. By 6 February 1801 Hayley had 'written the intended introduction to my biographical work', presumably the dedicatory letter.⁸⁷ He had still not received the 'abridged annals' that he needed from Johnny.

Lady Hesketh continued obstructive. In a letter of 6 February 1801 addressed to Johnny, Hayley complained of her attempts at censorship:

⁸⁴ Hayley papers, Box VII.

⁸⁵ Suarez, p. 56.

⁸⁶ *Memoirs*, II, p. 32

⁸⁷ *Memoirs*, II, p. 117.

...’her Ladyship, *entre nous*, seems to have garbled the collection you sent her, for she has not favoured me with the beginnings of the Poem on the 4 ages of man (a most important MS) and she has acted so absurdly and disingenuously (as I may say to you in private, in desiring you to stop in collecting information, as you nobly intended, from Mrs P[owley], and to send the Letters and other materials you happened to pick up, to Herself, instead of to me, that if my zealous attachment to the memory of our beloved bard did not nobly rise above my feelings of strong and just dislike of the proceedings of this irritable bewildered lady, I should Heartily wish to leave her to Herself ...⁸⁸

By April 1801 Hayley was ready to discuss publication face to face with Joseph Johnson, with the help of another bookseller Mr Edwards of Pall Mall, a mutual friend. As the owner of Cowper’s valuable copyrights Johnson would have been the obvious publisher for *The Life of Cowper*. There was much to be decided: the details of the printing and supply of paper; the production of the engravings; the advertising and selling arrangements: and crucially the ownership of the copyright and the division of costs.

Johnny was instructed to accompany the ‘the two literary merchants’, Johnson and Edwards, to Earham and then on to Felpham to meet Hayley:

I would advise you all to start very early in a post-chaise. You may easily reach Earham by four o’clock, where I will desire the good solitary woman, who at present takes care of the house to have a little cold meat ready for you, and after refreshing yourselves by a walk around that delightful garden, you may easily reach the turret before it grows dark’.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Hayley papers, Box XXVIII.

⁸⁹ *Memoirs*, II, p. 118.

Joseph Johnson's expectations of this meeting are unknown. It is likely that he would have wanted to acquire the copyright of Hayley's work, as an extension of the copyrights that he already held for Cowper's poetry, and that he would expect to control the process of publication. Later, in January 1807, he was to advise one of his authors, Elizabeth Hamilton of Edinburgh, 'A partnership between author and bookseller I do not recommend. It rarely turns out satisfactory'. Instead, in the same draft, Johnson advised that authors should cede control of publication to their bookseller, presumably in return for an agreed fee.

... the Authors have nothing to do but to send their manuscript in a legible state to the bookseller; furnishing paper and employing a printer and corrector of the press, advertising, vending, in short, everything else will be his business.⁹⁰

Hayley's *Memoirs* provided only the briefest record of the meeting with Johnson:

Terms were soon adjusted with the author, when Johnson, after an ineffectual contest, acquiesced in the positive requisition of Hayley to have his work printed in his native city of Chichester. The biographer was aware that provincial printing was liable to some objections...⁹¹

Against Johnson's wishes Hayley insisted that the work be printed locally in Chichester, by Joseph Seagrave. Hayley had worked with Seagrave previously on William Blake's *Designs to a Series of Ballads*.⁹² Johnson was already distrustful of country printers,⁹³ but Hayley presumably persuaded him that Seagrave was

⁹⁰ Joseph Johnson's Letterbook, 16 January 1807, Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle, The New York Public Library; references that follow are to the unnumbered photocopied version at the British Library, RP5898.

⁹¹ *Memoirs*, II, p. 32.

⁹² Nicholas Barker, 'Notes on the bibliography of William Hayley: 3. Printers and publishers', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 4.3 (1962), 339-360.

⁹³ Joseph Johnson's Letterbook, letter to Dr Stokes, 10 December 1800.

reliable and that it was advantageous to be able to correct the proofs locally. Johnson was to supply the paper.⁹⁴ The probable nature of the partnership between Hayley and Johnson will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three.

Meanwhile Hayley continued work. On 1 October 1801 Hayley reported to Johnny that Blake was working at Hayley's side 'on the intended decorations of our biography. Engraving, of all human works, appears to require the largest portion of patience.'⁹⁵ But Cowper's relatives were still proving tardy. Lady Hesketh claimed she could no longer remember the answers to Hayley's frequent questions. She wrote to Johnny on 22 October 1801:

...I little thought that every event of his life poor thing! would become so interesting to the Public as it was to me, and as I therefore made no memorandums of anything I am incapable of furnishing such dates and anecdotes as our Friend Hayley seems to require. I could not tell him *when* or *where* my Uncle dyed tho' that he dyed I have not the slightest doubt.⁹⁶

That month Lady Hesketh obliged Hayley by sending him the original of Thomas Lawrence's portrait of Cowper, which Blake wanted to copy as a frontispiece to Volume II. But she continued to hold back material from Hayley and in particular an autobiographical 'Memoir', of which Johnny had a copy. This was a manuscript written in the 1760s in which Cowper described his attempts at suicide, eventually published in 1816, and of which there were several copies in private circulation.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Russell, p. 246.

⁹⁵ *Memoirs*, II, p. 126

⁹⁶ Bodham-Johnson, p. 111.

⁹⁷ Russell, p. 193.

Lady Hesketh's obstructiveness was only one of the frustrations that Hayley faced. The partnership between Johnson and Hayley did not proceed entirely satisfactorily. A draft letter in Johnson's Letterbook dated 4 January 1802 accused Hayley of being over-generous in negotiating William Blake's payment for the engravings: 'the sum you mentioned to Mr Rose appears to me to be large and more than would be demanded by good artists here'. Johnson asked for the price to be settled 'to prevent any altercation hereafter', but at the same time he protested that he has no wish to interfere in Hayley's area of responsibility:

You are sensible I have not interfered in the slightest in the work in which you are engaged, you have your Department of which you have the sole command; and the other is claimed by your publisher, and publishers are apt to suppose that they can understand it.

It is worth noting that Johnson described his role here as that of 'publisher' rather than bookseller, at a time when the roles were still indistinct. He was still hopeful that Hayley would take his advice on the choice of printer.

I beg you to be assured I would not upon trifling grounds oppose your wishes ...it does not arise from whim or caprice...but from 49 yrs exp[erience] of co[untry] pr[inters] who are generally employed on small matters and seldom upon books.

Johnson also objected that the cost of carriage from the country would be considerable. Perhaps most important of all to Johnson, he wanted to produce a new edition of Cowper's poems in the same format as the *Life*, 'printed

uniformly with it, (and both should be printed the same)'.⁹⁸ He evidently anticipated that sales of the *Life* would stimulate sales of the poetry, but he was not prepared to have the new edition of the poems printed in Chichester.

Hayley won the argument on the printer. On the following page in Johnson's Letterbook is a note 'Ordered J. Seagrave to print 1000 demy and 150 royal of Hayley's *Life of Cowper* to be in this shop by beginning of Nov next'. And below that is a further undated note, 'Afterwards 100 more royal copies were ordered.'⁹⁹

At last, twelve months after Hayley began work, he was able to record in his *Memoirs* for 23 January 1802, that the manuscript was finished.¹⁰⁰ Printing began in March 1802.¹⁰¹ Hayley corrected the proof sheets week by week. By 26 September 1802 he reported to Johnny that he had 'just had the satisfaction of seeing in Seagrave's types '*The end of the First Volume*'. '¹⁰²

Towards the end of the year Hayley recorded that he was occupied in organising the presentation copies, 'and in preparing such letters and verses as he wished to attend the copies presented to those individuals of whose approbation he was

⁹⁸ Joseph Johnson's Letterbook, 4 January 1802.

⁹⁹ Joseph Johnson's Letterbook, ms note to letter of 4 January 1802.

¹⁰⁰ *Memoirs*, II, p. 32.

¹⁰¹ *Memoirs*, II, p.33.

¹⁰² *Memoirs*, II, p.147.

particularly ambitious'.¹⁰³ These were perhaps the hundred Royal copies added to Johnson's order to Seagrave.

And already Hayley was contemplating a continuation to the work. On 15 December 1802 he wrote to invite Johnny to Felpham, to help him return the borrowed manuscripts to their owners, and also to see whether there was enough material for a second edition:

You will rejoice to hear, that we hope to print the very last sheet of our long work in a few days – The copies intended for you and yr Norfolk friends, I shall reserve in the Turret till you arrive, - and when you are with me we will lay our heads together, to examine minutely all the mass of manuscript letters, to see if I have omitted anything, that we may use to deserve another Edition.¹⁰⁴

By the end of December the first advance copies were in circulation. Lady Hesketh wasted no time in reading them. She was exultant, writing from Clifton on 30 December 1802:

Oh my dear good Johnny! How can I ever express or describe to you what I think of '*Cowper's Life*'! – you indeed do right to call it The Life' – it is indeed The Life, and I hope there will never be another of anybody – no one indeed should attempt writing one, who has not all the happy Talents and all the Sensibility of our friend Hayley...¹⁰⁵

But she was conscious that the critics would review the book at the first opportunity. In a continuation to the letter the next day, still enthusiastic about Hayley's work, she wrote:

¹⁰³ *Memoirs*, II, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Cowper and Newton Museum, OLN CN:2649/32/B.

¹⁰⁵ Bodham-Johnson, pp. 118-119.

By the way how I dread the Tearing and Rending – the mauling and Scrawling – the fleaing and flaying of the Critics! And I shall shake like a leaf at the sight of every Magazine and review that falls my way....

This chapter has described the process of composing *The Life of Cowper*, and how Hayley drew his previous experience of biography and on the extensive collections in his library to structure his book. His initial concept of a biographical preface to Cowper's poetry grew into something far more ambitious, namely a freestanding biography based on Cowper's own letters and testimony from people who knew him. But he remained mindful of the need to protect Cowper's reputation from criticism.

Hayley's copious correspondence with Cowper's relatives and network of friends was perhaps how John Higgins came to hear of Hayley's project and contributed a 'lost' poem to it.

CHAPTER THREE

At least one contemporary critic recognised that Hayley's *Life of Cowper* represented a new departure in literary biography. It was published as a biography in its own right, rather than as the preface to Cowper's poems which Hayley had originally contemplated. Its extravagances of length and language provoked satire in the newest edition of *The Pursuits of Literature*, a popular poetic diatribe by T. J. Mathias.¹⁰⁶ *The Pursuits of Literature* had first appeared in 1794 but was regularly updated. By 1805 it boasted footnotes far longer than the poem itself. The introduction considered the latest undesirable trend in biographical writing:

In particular I would observe that the modern style of Biography calls for some animadversion. When the examples of great men, poets, statesmen, or philosophers are to be delivered to the world, the office of the Biographer is arduous and requires no common talents. But now the unequalled simplicity of Plutarch, the sense and spirit of Johnson, and the discriminating taste of Mason are lost in the disgusting modern language of affectation and cant of sensibility.

That Mathias's criticism is directed at Hayley is not in doubt; the passage continues with a satirical letter from an aspiring biographer to his bookseller, Mr Wirewove Hotpress, and asks his opinion of a nonsensical biographical project. Mr Wirewove responds enthusiastically, and suggests that the author should

¹⁰⁶ T. J. Mathias *The Pursuits of Literature*, 13th edn, (London: T. Becket, 1805).

‘weave into the texture of my memoirs; an extensive collection of private letters and posthumous rhymes’. Mr Wirewove is quoting directly from *The Life of Cowper*; if by any chance Mathias’s readers missed the point, the passage continues with a description of the format of the book ‘spun out into three or more large volumes in royal quarto with a price highly gratifying to purchasers after a long war’. The passage then mocks Hayley’s affectations of language. Mr Wirewove promises:

He would take it upon himself to say, that such a work would “continue to sparkle in the eyes of all men, like the radiant star of the evening”... NB The reader will perceive that the writer of this letter is particularly versed in the phraseology of MR HAYLEY IN HIS LIFE OF COWPER (lately published) from which he has culled a few (and a very few) of the choicest flowers of language and metaphors *verbatim*.¹⁰⁷

Hayley’s reaction to Mathias’s comments is unknown, but when Hayley’s library was catalogued for sale after his death there was no mention of a copy of *The Pursuits of Literature*.

Otherwise the reviews of the first two volumes alternated between praise for Cowper’s letters and criticism of Hayley’s style. It was briefly mentioned in the new *Edinburgh Review*.¹⁰⁸ *The Monthly Review* for July 1803 thought the work extravagant, noting the difficulty of avoiding partiality when writing a biography of a friend. ‘Much as we are obliged to Mr Hayley for collecting every record of

¹⁰⁷ Mathias, pp. ix-xi.

¹⁰⁸ Darcy, p.196.

this amiable man and true poet ... we cannot approve the high-flown eulogy in which he has indulged his pen'.¹⁰⁹

These were not reviews likely to guarantee huge sales; it is more likely that early sales of *The Life of Cowper* were influenced by the elusive power of 'word of mouth', helped by Cowper's status as a fashionable poet and Hayley's distribution of presentation copies. Not all the recipients were grateful. Hayley was surely distressed by the response from the bluestocking Anna Seward, a former friend. In March 1803 she acknowledged receipt of this 'estimable and costly present'. But having read it she found Cowper 'a vapourish egotist', and as for his letters, 'surely they do not possess the literary usefulness of Pope's letters, the wit and imagination of Gray's ... or the brilliance, the grace, the play of fancy, which, in former years, rendered your letters to me equal to the best of Madame Sevigné's'.¹¹⁰

Johnson was sufficiently pleased with early orders for the first two volumes to commission a second edition in 1803 from Seagrave. The original print run, at 1150 copies, was already large; 750 copies may have been a standard figure for a serious work of some general interest.¹¹¹ The size of the second edition is

¹⁰⁹ *Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal*, July 1803, pp. 225-45. <http://0-search.proquest.com/catalogue.ulrslon.ac.uk/britishperiodicals/docview/4678941/251C637D944C4E45PQ/1?accountid=14565>

¹¹⁰ *Letters of Anna Seward written between the years 1784 and 1807*, 6 vols (Edinburgh, 1811), VI, Letter XII, p.63.

¹¹¹ Theodore Bestermann, *The Publishing Firm of Cadell and Davies, Selected Correspondence and Accounts 1793-1836* (Oxford and London: Humphrey Milford, 1938), p. xxxi.

unknown. Seagrave set a new title page, adding the words 'SECOND EDITION', reset the first page and made some minor amendments.¹¹²

Meanwhile Hayley was already working on Volume III. To the 458 letters already printed, he added letters to two more of Cowper's correspondents, John Newton and William Unwin. Hayley prefaced this third volume with his essay on the classical and contemporary art of letter-writing, '*Desultory Remarks on the Letters of eminent persons, particularly those of Pope and Cowper*'.

The content reads like a response to the unforgiving Miss Seward, although her name was not mentioned. Unfortunately Hayley's essay failed to convince Anna Seward; her response to his gift of Volume III was as hostile as before.¹¹³ But the third volume earned an enthusiastic ten-page review in *The Monthly Review*, inspiring other journals to follow suit. *The Monthly Review*'s critic was won over by the quality of Cowper's letters: 'Cowper's forte was letter-writing, and he has himself so minutely detailed his avocations and his thoughts, that, without intending it, he became his own biographer'.¹¹⁴ This was the quality that Mason had claimed for *The Life of Gray* and which was to help set the fashion for the lengthy biographies of the nineteenth century.

¹¹² Russell, p. 252.

¹¹³ *Letters of Anna Seward*, VI, Letter XXVII, p. 159.

¹¹⁴ *Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal*, July 1804, pp. 241-52. <http://0-search.proquest.com/catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk/britishperiodicals/docview/4673446/9018CACB6CB942B6PQ/24?accountid=14565>

After Hayley added his third volume of *The Life* in 1804, the entire work was reprinted in 1806, this time in octavo, (four volumes, in both ordinary and large paper), and again in 1809. The octavo edition contained an extended version of Hayley's '*Desultory Remarks*', perhaps in answer to critics of Cowper's work. Hayley added two final paragraphs on the subject of Cowper's 'delicacy', a quality Hayley admired and which he goes on to define as 'good sense refined ... and warm sensibility of whatever is pure, regular and polite'.¹¹⁵ Another edition appeared in 1812, after Joseph Johnson's death.

Could the profit from these editions have possibly added up to 'the almost incredible sum of eleven thousand pounds' that Hayley was reported by Alexander Stephens to have made from *The Life of Cowper*? No records survive to explain the contractual arrangements between Hayley and Joseph Johnson. Hayley was careful not to cede control to Johnson; he knew that William Cowper had transferred the copyright for his poetry to Johnson, and that in return Johnson had undertaken the expenses of the publication and the risk of loss.¹¹⁶ As a result Johnson flourished, but Cowper lived much of the rest of his life in financial hardship.

Hayley's own experience of London booksellers had taught him the value of retaining his copyright. In the 1780s he enjoyed some success as a playwright and essayist. His first publisher was the fashionable bookseller Robert Dodsley. Hayley recalled in his *Memoirs* that Dodsley 'had given, what the poet himself

¹¹⁵ *Life of Cowper*, 1809 edition, I, pp. 62-63.

¹¹⁶ Russell, p. 39.

thought, very liberal prices for every work he purchased'. But Dodsley 'grumbled', and Hayley decided to change publisher to Cadell. He was forced to buy back his copyrights from Dodsley for £500.¹¹⁷ The transfer to a new publisher was a difficult process, and Hayley had to ask Edmund Gibbon to mediate for him. He angrily recalled 'the timorous avidity of Cadell to make a good bargain for himself as the publisher, but not the purchaser, of a popular author's present and future compositions'. Hayley had further bad experience of booksellers when George Nicol refused to print the *Life of Milton* that he had originally commissioned from him.

The choice of Gibbon as Hayley's mediator with Dodsley was astute. Gibbon was another of the authors reported by Stephens to have made a fortune from his work. Decades later, in the mid-nineteenth century, Charles Knight in his *Shadows of the Old Booksellers* reprinted an account dating from 1777 for the printing of the third edition of Gibbon's '*Roman Empire*'. Gibbon received two thirds of the receipts, and his publishers Messrs Strahan and Cadell, just one third. Knight pointed out that in the nineteenth century Gibbon would have earned much less. His share would have been no more than half, after deductions and payment of a ten per cent commission for the publisher.¹¹⁸

As an alternative to selling his copyright, Hayley could have opted to publish by subscription, appointing Johnson to manage both the subscription payments and publication. This was the way that Hayley was later to publish an edition of

¹¹⁷ Memoir, II, p. 291.

¹¹⁸ Charles Knight, *Shadows of the Old Booksellers* (London, 1865), p. 227.

Cowper's Milton, to raise money for Cowper's orphan godson, but few sales were expected.¹¹⁹ No doubt Lady Hesketh's acquaintance could be relied on for subscriptions, but subscription was less likely to make a profit for the author.

It seems most likely that *The Life of Cowper* was published by commission, on similar lines to Gibbon's arrangements with Cadell. Hayley may have paid a fixed commission fee to Johnson, in return for a generous proportion of receipts once the production and advertising costs were covered. If Johnson's share was primarily his commission fee, it would explain why he gave way on the choice of a country printer, and why it was that early in 1803 he told Seagrave that the Chichester printer's failure to deliver printed labels for the books would affect Hayley's sales, a matter that 'is of little consequence to him [Mr Johnson] compared to its importance to the author'.¹²⁰ That same copy letter goes on to say that the delay would cause *The Life of Cowper* to miss the best season of the year for sales, when 'the town had been full, parliament did not sit, and no important work appeared to interest the public'.

Both Johnson and Hayley must have been confident that the book would sell well. Biography was popular, and so too Cowper's poetry. Even so, the book trade was a risky business, requiring capital and offering no guarantee of a return. William Goodhugh, writing two decades after the first publication of *The*

¹¹⁹ Joseph Johnson's Letterbook, 5 September 1809.

¹²⁰ Joseph Johnson's Letterbook, 15 February 1803.

Life of Cowper, estimated that only ten per cent of new titles made any significant gain, and that sixty per cent of titles made a commercial loss.¹²¹

In proportion to the general profits on capital obtained in our country, booksellers are not opulent. Their trade is too speculative, too hazardous; a few may be opulent but not the greater number ... an eighteen penny volume has been known to have cleared eighteen hundred pounds in four or five years ... On the other hand I have known thousands of pounds expended on works to sell less than one hundred copies.¹²²

Joseph Johnson's view of the trade was similarly pragmatic, as his advice in 1807 to Elizabeth Hamilton of Edinburgh showed. As an established writer on education she had proposed that Johnson should publish a new educational journal on her behalf. He responded that he would lose money on such a venture, and that authors had no understanding of the realities of the trade. Discount was all-important in ensuring sales:

... your bookseller will merely be an agent, he must allow the trade twenty nine per cent, and if you allow him five per cent besides it will not indemnify him for his trouble, in a case where the returns are so small. The common mistake made by Authors is that a bookseller sells his publications at the advertised prices; nothing can be more fallacious; I have disposed of many large editions without selling one in fifty at that price, the rest at the discount above mentioned, or a larger deduction. The profit to a publisher from retail sale is so small that it never comes into our calculations.¹²³

Johnson did not specify whether he applied the same generous level of discount to both books and journals. His surviving Letterbook, now at the

¹²¹ Goodhugh, p. 82.

¹²² Goodhugh, p. 74.

¹²³ Joseph Johnson's Letterbook, 9 February 1807.

New York Public Library, offers a window into his business affairs. It includes copy correspondence with booksellers, printers and authors. The men and the women who gathered around his table for his weekly dinners were extraordinarily varied in their interests.¹²⁴ There were philosophers and poets, historians and liberal-leaning political writers, not least Thomas Paine, author of *The Rights of Man*.¹²⁵ There is no evidence that Hayley joined these dinner-table meetings. Was this perhaps because the relationship between Hayley, as the commissioning author, and his bookseller was one of patron and servitor, rather than the attraction of shared intellectual interests that brought other writers to Johnson's table?

Before the mechanisation of print the printing of books was an expensive process requiring considerable capital. In the 1790s the financial pressures of war with France drove up prices; the tax on printing paper was doubled in 1801.¹²⁶ One of the most often-quoted records for the cost of printing a book is that provided by Owen Rees of Longman's to a parliamentary enquiry in 1818.¹²⁷ Rees estimated the manufacturing cost of a quarto edition of 250 copies, without illustrations, at around £180, or £240 once advertising and selling costs of £60 were added (see *Appendix C* for a breakdown of costs). The main element of the cost was setting the type, at around one third of the total. Paper was the next most expensive

¹²⁴ Jeffrey N. Cox and William Galperin, 'Joseph Johnson', *Wordsworth Circle*, 40 (2009), pp. 93-95.

¹²⁵ James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450-1850* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 211.

¹²⁶ John Bidwell, 'The industrialisation of the paper trade', in Suarez and Turner, p. 204.

¹²⁷ St Clair, p.191.

element in Rees's example, at around £55 for 250 copies, followed by the costs for finishing (pressing and boarding). The eventual unit cost would have been around 19 shillings per copy. The bookseller would then set a retail price which might be no more than 50 per cent extra for a schoolbook, but at least double the unit cost for most titles. Rees reckoned his wholesale prices at exactly 25% less than the retail price, in contrast to Joseph Johnson's note of 1807 that 29% was the norm. If Johnson was right in saying that most copies sold at the lowest wholesale price, then in Rees's example the cost per copy would have been roughly £1 3s 6d. His figures suggest that Longman's would have to sell 200 copies of their quarto edition before they covered their costs. The profit would lie in the last fifty copies, which might, or might not sell.

As an experienced bookseller Johnson would have known how best to price *The Life of Cowper*. He set the retail price of the first two volumes at '£2. 12. 6 in boards for ordinary paper (demy 4°)', a figure likely to have been at least double the unit cost of the printing. The royal paper copies cost more to produce but presented more opportunity for profit. Based on the Longman example, Appendix C provides some very speculative figures for the cost of printing the first two volumes of *The Life of Cowper*. The print run was large, which would reduce the unit cost for the two volumes to perhaps just over £1 per set, very much less than the advertised retail price. Even if Johnson sold most of copies in the first edition at a discounted price (£1 17s if he allowed a 30 per cent discount), there was still a substantial profit to be made. Hayley could have

expected to receive over £1000 on that first edition alone. And demand was sufficiently large to justify an order for a second printing in 1803.

The advertised price of Hayley's third volume was less, at a mere one guinea. The next full edition to be produced was the 1806 edition, advertised at the substantial price of 42 shillings per set, and 56 shillings for large paper copies. The 1806 edition included thirty-nine new letters and an index for the first time. But by now Hayley had parted company with Blake and the sole illustration was a frontispiece engraving by Caroline Watson. The print run for this edition may have been 1500 copies; she wrote to Hayley that the plate would run to 1500 good impressions.¹²⁸ Hayley stood to earn another £1500.

Hayley's revisions for the octavo edition meant that the arrangement of the material in the quarto volumes was now out of date. Hayley and Johnson therefore issued the revision to the quarto edition known as '*Supplementary Pages to the Life of Cowper*', priced at just 7s. 6d. in boards, 10s. 6d. for the royal version. There was a precedent for such an edition; James Boswell produced a similar volume for owners of the quarto edition of his *Life of Johnson* when he revised the work for a second edition in octavo format.¹²⁹

Again, there would have been a profit for Hayley, albeit a small one. Separately, Johnson had an opportunity to increase his profits when at last in 1806 he issued the promised quarto edition of Cowper's *Poems*, printed by Thomas Bensley in

¹²⁸ Russell, p. 254.

¹²⁹ Boswell, (Advertisement to the second edition), I, p. xvi.

London and advertised as a companion volume to Hayley's *Life*.¹³⁰

By April 1807 Seagrave had fallen out with Hayley. There was an exchange of angry letters and when Seagrave threatened to print no more books, Hayley responded:

... You tell me that you have no pleasure but in printing for Auctioneers, that if I want you to execute any business for me, I must come in person to your City and goad you into service. .. In saying this, I can say, with my whole heart, that I entirely forgive and will forget – I am truly your friend and wish to promote your professional prosperity and comfort.¹³¹

Another revised edition of the *Life* was issued in 1809. Rather than '*The Life, and Posthumous Writings*' the wording of the title was changed to '*The Life, and Letters of William Cowper Esq.*'. It seems the letters were now seen as the chief attraction of the biography. The 1809 edition contained only two new letters, but each of the four volumes was indexed. It was again printed in Chichester, this time by Seagrave's successor William Mason.

In 1809 Joseph Johnson died. The *Life of Cowper*, including four new letters, was reprinted by Thomas Bensley of Fleet Street in 1812, this time for 'J. Johnson and Co. St Paul's Churchyard', the company run by Johnson's great nephews Rowland Hunter and John Miles. By now Hayley may have ceded his editorial role and copyright in return for a large payment from Johnson. There is a curious work in the British Library entitled 'References to the Case of Mr Fuseli's Legacy under the will of the late Joseph Johnson', put together by

¹³⁰ Russell, p. 75.

¹³¹ Hayley Papers, Box XI, 43, 3 April 1807.

Johnson's nephew Joseph Johnson of Liverpool.¹³² This particular compilation seems to have escaped a historian of Johnson's will.¹³³ Joseph Johnson of Liverpool was named as one of three executors of the will, alongside Hunter and Miles. He was also his uncle's residuary legatee. Bequests that Johnson made to his friends, including to Henry Fuseli, went unpaid and Joseph Johnson of Liverpool found it necessary to contest the will in the Ecclesiastical Courts. Hunter and Miles did their best to exclude him from the settlement of the estate and apparently withheld information from him about the copyrights owned by the company. He then had their correspondence printed as a record, in readiness for a lawsuit. The bound compilation includes sensational accounts, 'printed and sold by all Booksellers and Newsmen, 1817, Price One Shilling', of a fraud committed by Miles and brought before the Court of Chancery in 1817.

Amongst the documents that Joseph Johnson had printed are references to the company's dealings with William Hayley and to a bond for £5,000 given to him by the executors, a decision of which Joseph Johnson of Liverpool had disapproved:

I was afterwards convinced by an application to Mr Hayley's solicitor that my uncle had actually made such an agreement with Mr Hayley, that is for the payment of an annuity on the condition of his Editing A Work, entitled 'Life and Letters of Cowper &c'.¹³⁴

¹³² Joseph Johnson of Liverpool, *The Case of Mr Fuseli's Legacy under the Will of the Late Mr Joseph Johnson of St Paul's Church Yard*, 1817.

¹³³ P. Mann, 'Death of a London Bookseller', *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*, 15 (1964), pp. 8-12.

¹³⁴ Joseph Johnson of Liverpool, Part III, letter to Mr Henry Denison, solicitor, Castle St., Liverpool.

The granting of an annuity by a bookseller to an author was not unknown. After Thomas Campbell, author of *The Pleasures of Hope*, sold the copyright of his poem to his publisher in 1799 for £60, and £50 on every new edition, he commented that: ‘although after his success he realised it was worth an annuity of £200 for life, he was not surprised at the meagreness of the payment’.¹³⁵

And according to Johnny Johnson’s preface to Hayley’s *Memoirs*, Hayley negotiated a ‘very considerable’ annuity for life from Henry Colburn for the work, which Colburn had agreed to publish on Hayley’s death.¹³⁶ One hostile reviewer in *Blackwood’s Magazine* began his review by congratulating Colburn on his release from such an obligation:

Hayley drivelled away on to a good, dull, old age, like most annuitants, and his death, which could not be looked on by anybody as a national calamity, must have been most agreeable to Mr Colburn.¹³⁷

Hayley was astute at looking after his own financial interests. It seems that the early success of *The Life of Cowper* enable him to negotiate an annuity from Joseph Johnson, subsequently paid by Johnson’s executors in the form of a bond for five thousand pounds. Each new edition of the book would have added to Hayley’s profits, and, if the annuity is added in, it seems possible that *The Life of Cowper* did indeed make eleven thousand pounds for its author. That success

¹³⁵ A. S. Collins, *The Profession of Letters, 1780- 183* (London: George Routledge, 1928), p. 92,

¹³⁶ *Memoirs*, I Preface, i.

¹³⁷ HAYLEY’S MEMOIRES, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh magazine*, September 1823, pp. 303-308. <http://0search.proquest.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/britishperiodicals/docview/6524334/F50CB830087C461EPQ/1?accountid=14565>

presumably encouraged Henry Colburn to agree a further annuity for Hayley's memoirs, twelve years before Hayley died.

Hayley had been fortunate in his timing; after 1812 *The Life of Cowper* was not reprinted until 1824. And Hayley's posthumous memoirs were never reprinted.

CONCLUSION

This discussion of Hayley's *Life of Cowper* began with a close look at the extra-illustrated copy from Turvey Abbey, but has widened into a broader picture of the early nineteenth-century book trade and the profits to be made from writing and publishing a literary biography.

As a methodology this progression from an individual copy to an exploration of book trade practices involves considerable speculation, and cannot necessarily be replicated with other titles of the period. In the case of Mr Higgins's Hayley, the process seems justifiable, thanks to the presence of the Turvey Abbey bookplates, the association with Cowper, and the wealth of letters and memoirs that have been preserved. The business letterbook of Joseph Johnson has also provided some crucial evidence; Oxford University Press is to publish a scholarly edition of the book in 2016 and that will doubtless highlight the extent of Johnson's publishing activities. But in the meantime, prior to the publication of the Letterbook, the account in Chapter Three of William Hayley's dealings with Johnson indicates the variety of agreements that existed between authors and their bookseller. The retention or sale of copyright underpinned these agreements. Hayley, by retaining his copyright for *The Life of Cowper* managed to earn considerable sums.

Johnson described himself to Hayley as a publisher; the role of the

publisher was becoming increasingly professionalised. An aspect of Joseph Johnson's publishing that deserves further examination is the quality of the printed work that he produced. The obituary written by John Aikin for *The Gentleman's Magazine* described him as 'an enemy to typographical luxury', who valued cheapness and accessibility rather than the appearance of his books.¹³⁸ That summary has coloured later assessments of Johnson's publishing. Yet *The Life of Cowper* shows that Johnson could also be associated with elegant printing and high prices. This present study indicates that Johnson was also an able businessman, who understood the importance of discount to generate sales; and who possibly provided a bigger discount to his customers than the twenty five per cent that Longman offered. Just as in the twenty-first century, discounts generated sales, but the level of discount was probably kept private between bookseller and wholesaler, just as it now.

An initial aim for this study was to consider the extent to which *The Life of Cowper* could throw light on the writing and publishing of literary biography in the period around 1800. The popularity of Hayley's *Life of Cowper* was evidenced by the speed with which other publishers made use of it, producing abridged versions for a fraction of the price of the original. Vernor and Hood took the opportunity to commission the views in *Cowper, Illustrated*, showing the places made famous by Cowper's poetry. And the sales of the biography

¹³⁸ John Aikin, 'Biographical Account of the late Mr. Joseph Johnson', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1809, p.1167, <http://0search.proquest.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/britishperiodicals/docview/8305551/C5DF744941934E45PQ/6?accountid=14565>

were also linked to increased sales for Joseph Johnson of Cowper's poetry, and the production of a companion volume to match the elegant quarto edition of *The Life of Cowper*. The focus on Mr Higgins's copy demonstrates the value that one provincial family attached to their book, and the way in which the book's extra-illustration was symbolic of the family's link to a celebrated local poet.

The Life of Cowper is perhaps best understood as part of a biographical tradition that extended beyond the purely literary. As we have seen, William Goodhugh, recommended the acquisition both of 'single, or detached lives' and 'collective biographies'. Lord Sheffield's biography of the historian Edmund Gibbon was probably as important an influence for Hayley as *The Life of Burns* or Mason's *Life of Gray*. During Hayley's lifetime, perceptions of biography were changing; the 'epistolary biography' became an increasingly accepted form. Letters allowed the subject of the biography to tell his or her own story, to appear 'his own Biographer' in the manner of Gray and Gibbon and Cowper.

Hayley's efforts to collect material and to interview Cowper's acquaintances suggest a degree of research that went beyond hearsay and classical exemplars. This study has shown that Hayley himself changed course after he started on the biography. From an initial plan to produce a biographical preface to Cowper's poetry Hayley produced an autonomous biography. His success in promoting Cowper as a letter-writer, and not solely as a poet, was evidenced by the changed title of *The Life of Cowper* in later editions of the book.

Despite Hayley's energetic search for material he was still content to bowdlerise Cowper's letters. It was accepted that the subject of a biography should be presented in the most positive light. Hayley ignored the sensitivities of Cowper's domestic life, and he glossed over the subject of Cowper's mental instability.

According to Jane Darcy's reading, it was Hayley's failure to discuss Cowper's mental problems that created a conflict with evangelical commentators. Darcy devoted the final chapter of her book, *Melancholy and Literary Biography, to The Life of Cowper*.¹³⁹ The overall theme of the book is the way in which literary biography, from the time of Donne and Herbert onwards, was influenced by changing interpretations of melancholy. Melancholy was variously interpreted as a state of mind that could invoke both extreme suffering and poetic inspiration; one of its characteristics was the particular condition of religious melancholy.

Darcy reads *The Life of Cowper* as a well-meaning attempt by Hayley to present Cowper as a man of sensibility, and, by omission, to deny Cowper's extreme religious views. She then suggests that the impact of the book was to fan into life a bitter controversy between the evangelicals keen to separate Cowper's depression from his religious faith, and the detractors of evangelicalism who believed that Cowper's Calvinist belief in his own damnation affected his sanity. Ultimately, she writes, revelations about Cowper's religious enthusiasm 'threatened to undermine Cowper's image as one inspired by religious wisdom'.

¹³⁹ Darcy, pp.172-204.

From this, the reader might infer that *The Life of Cowper* undermined the popularity of Cowper's poetry, but, as Norma Russell made clear, Cowper's poetry grew in popularity in the first half of the nineteenth century. Darcy's reading of the arguments between evangelical critics inflates their importance.

Darcy suggests that 1816, more than a decade after the publication of *The Life*, was a turning point in the re-evaluation of Cowper's reputation, and 'one that would intensify critical debate about the whole project of literary biography'. This was the year, she writes, of 'the unauthorised publication of his conversion narrative, *Adelphi*'.¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately her study conflates two autobiographical works by Cowper, both of them at heart 'conversion narratives'. The first, *Adelphi*, was in fact published in 1802 rather than 1816. It was edited by Cowper's evangelical friend John Newton, and described the last illness and 'deathbed conversion' of Cowper's brother John. The publication of the work was noted disapprovingly both in *The Gentleman's Magazine* and *The Critical Review* in 1802. The latter's brief notice concluded: 'When we recollect the unhappy state of his brother [William] for many years, we are not inclined to believe that this conversion would have been beneficial either to the deceased or the public'.¹⁴¹

The argument between the evangelical minority, represented by Newton, and the Anglican majority represented by the critics of *Adelphi*, was already in progress by 1802 and well before Hayley's *Life of Cowper* appeared. Samuel Greatheed,

¹⁴⁰ Darcy, p. 173.

¹⁴¹ 'Miscellaneous List', *The Critical Review*, February 1802, p. 238.

an acquaintance of John Newton and of Cowper, preached a funeral sermon for Cowper in May 1800 at the Independent Chapel in Olney. The sermon spoke of Cowper's mental illness and his attempts at suicide. Although Darcy refers to it as a work that Greatheed intended to publish,¹⁴² it was in fact published three months later in September 1800. According to the title page, it was printed and sold by J Wakefield of Newport Pagnell, and sold in London by T. Williams, bookseller, of 10 Stationers Court. Greatheed made the mistake of dedicating the work to Lady Hesketh. Her influence was extensive; she successfully demanded either suppression of the entire work or some major re-editing. A second edition, heavily corrected, was published the following year. Norma Russell provides a full description of this small episode of publishing history.¹⁴³

The eventual publication in 1816, in two rival editions, of Cowper's other 'conversion narrative', *Memoir of the Early Life of William Cowper, Esq.*, may have had less of an impact on Cowper's reputation than Darcy assumed. Darcy's close reading of some periodical reviews that followed suggested to her that its publication marked a turning point in terms of critics' readiness to take issue on the question of Cowper's sanity. They would no longer accept the kind of reverential literary biography that Hayley produced and his glossing-over of mental or moral weakness.

There is much in Darcy's book which is valuable and pioneering. But the book would have been all the better had she had made greater use of surviving copies

¹⁴² Darcy, p. 190.

¹⁴³ Russell, p. 242

of the texts she discussed. Book history is valuable in negotiating the mass of digitised texts. Digitised reviews are easily accessible, but they provide only part of the picture. Publication details and the political or sectarian leanings of particular journals are not always clear from on-screen extracts.

It was not part of Hayley's role to open a debate on the nature of Cowper's religious sympathies, and indeed Lady Hesketh would not have allowed it. She clearly controlled the content of the biography; Hayley's role was that of an authorised biographer licensed by Cowper's Anglican and patrician family. Readers who acquired Hayley's expensive quarto volumes were unlikely to have wanted to challenge the prevailing image of Cowper as a poet of sensibility. Despite this, Hayley interested himself in Cowper's mental state. Hayley's library (Item 368 in the catalogue) contained a copy of Alexander Crichton's *Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Mental Derangement*, 1798, a book mentioned by Darcy. Crichton wrote that sufferers from delirium might well imagine they were forsaken by God.¹⁴⁴ Hayley would surely have recognised Cowper's condition in this. Crichton highlighted the link between religious enthusiasm, suicide, and the evangelicals (variously called dissenters or Methodists by their detractors).

Religious enthusiasm gives birth to two irresistible desires, both of which terminate in suicide, one a deep melancholy, the other a very strong desire of eternal happiness. The first is, unfortunately, a very common case

¹⁴⁴ Alexander Crichton, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Mental Derangement*, 3 vols (London: Cadell & Davies, 1798), III, pp. 140-141.

in this country, especially among the lower orders of Methodists.

It is hardly surprising that Hayley, mindful of Cowper's 'delicacy' and writing for a primarily Anglican upper class audience, passed over such discussions in his biography. Hayley's virtue was to allow Cowper 'to be his own Biographer' by searching out so many letters and original documents.

Jane Darcy called *The Life of Cowper* 'the first significant literary biography of the nineteenth century', but without pinpointing its particular significance. The success of *The Life of Cowper*, rumoured to have made so much money for its author, was initially based upon a fashionable appetite for Cowper's poetry.

Hayley's intention was surely to aim the book at his own well-to-do contemporaries, and to produce some elegant volumes to be added to the shelves of private libraries in London and the provinces. In this he succeeded. It was not the purpose of this dissertation to consider the work's merits or demerits; modern readers' sympathies would probably lie with Mr Wirewove Hotpress's judgement on the book. But its publishing history was significant; together Hayley and Joseph Johnson maximised their profit by issuing the book in different editions and formats. Were this study to be continued, it would be good to look at the pattern of editions of previous biographies, and also to consider the publishing activity of some of Joseph Johnson's contemporaries, to see how they priced and advertised their output of biography.

The last word goes to Hayley, now largely forgotten as a writer but to be remembered as an enthusiastic biographer. *The Gentleman's Magazine* paid him a final patriotic tribute in a review of his *Memoirs* in 1823:

We doubt not, the work will be considered as an acquisition to our Stores of National Biography and Literary History.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1823, pp. 538-539.

Appendix A: Principal editions of Hayley's *Life of Cowper* 1803 – 1812*

Date	Imprint from title page	Physical appearance	Illustrations
<p>1. January 1803</p> <p>First edition, in two volumes only.</p>	<p><i>Printed by J. Seagrave;</i> FOR J. JOHNSON, ST PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON. 1803</p>	<p>Two volumes, demy and royal quarto.</p>	<p>Vol I, Frontispiece: portrait of Cowper engraved by Blake, after Romney, and, facing p.4, Cowper's mother engraved by Blake. Vol II, Frontispiece: head of Cowper engraved by Blake, after Lawrence. On p.415, Blake's original drawing 'Motto on a Clock'</p>
<p>2. Later in 1803</p> <p>Second edition issued to meet demand, partially reset but with minor textual changes only.</p>	<p><i>PRINTED BY J. SEAGRAVE;</i> FOR J. JOHNSON, ST PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON. 1803</p>	<p>Two volumes, demy and royal quarto.</p>	<p><i>As above</i></p>
<p>3. May 1804</p> <p>Third volume added, with introductory essay, 'Desultory Remarks on the Letters of Eminent Persons', and additional letters.</p>	<p><i>PRINTED BY J. SEAGRAVE;</i> FOR J. JOHNSON, ST PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON. 1804</p>	<p>Single additional volume, demy and royal quarto.</p>	<p>Frontispiece: engraving by Blake, after Francis Stone, of Cowper's grave, and, variously positioned, Blake's engraving of Flaxman's design for a monument</p>
<p>4. Early 1806</p>	<p>PRINTED BY J. SEAGRAVE, FOR J. JOHNSON, ST PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON</p>	<p>'<i>SUPPLEMENTARY PAGES</i>' for owners of the quarto volumes, containing the additions made to the octavo edition. Demy and royal, 4o.</p>	<p>Frontispiece engraving of a tree, Cowper's Oak, engraved by Caroline Watson</p>

Appendix A, cont., Principal editions of Hayley's <i>Life of Cowper</i> 1803 - 1812			
<p>5. May 1806</p> <p>The first octavo edition, in four volumes.</p> <p>Titlepage of first volume reads 'A New and Enlarged Edition'</p>	<p>(Printed by J. Seagrave for J. Johnson)</p> <p>(not seen, but described in <i>A Bookman's Catalogue</i> Vol. 1 A-L: The Norman Colbeck Collection University of British Columbia).</p>	<p>Four volumes Demy and royal, 8o</p> <p>Incorporates additional letters and brief additions to the 'Desultory Remarks on the Letters of Eminent Persons'</p>	<p>Frontispiece portrait of Cowper engraved by Caroline Watson, after Romney. The original Blake engravings no longer appear.</p>
<p>6. 1809</p> <p>'A New Edition' of the octavo edition in four volumes.</p>	<p>Chichester: Printed by W. Mason for J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-Yard, London. 1809.</p>	<p>Four volumes Demy and royal, 8o</p>	<p>Same frontispiece portrait of Cowper engraved by Caroline Watson</p>
<p>7. 1812</p> <p>Reprint of the octavo edition of 1809.</p>	<p>London: Printed for J. Johnson and Co. St Paul's Churchyard, by T. Bensley, Bolt Court, Fleet Street. 1812</p>	<p>Four volumes, Demy and royal, 8o</p>	<p>As above</p>

* For bibliographic details of all these editions, see Russell, pp. 244-245.

Appendix B: List of the original engravings (shaded cells), and extra-illustrations in Mr Higgins's Hayley.

	Subject and position in gathering	Artist (A) and engraver (E)	Inscription	Facing page number:
1.	Silhouette of Cowper (pen and ink)	John Higgins		Endpaper, before frontispiece
2.	Portrait of William Cowper (engraving)	George Romney (A) and William Blake (E)	WILLIAM COWPER Carmine Nobilem <i>Publish'd Novembr. 5. 1802</i> <i>by J. Johnson, St Pauls Churchyard</i> From a Portrait in Crayons Drawn from the Life by Romney in 1782	Frontispiece
3.	Portrait of Cowper's mother (engraved from a portrait miniature)	D. Heins (A) and William Blake (E)	Mrs Cowper / Mother of the Poet <i>Publish'd Novembr. 5. 1802</i> <i>by J. Johnson, St Pauls Churchyard</i>	p. 4
4.	Olney Church	James Storer (A) and John Greig (E)	OLNEY CHURCH, <i>'Tall Spire from which the sound of cheerfull bells / Just undulates upon the list'ning ear (The Task I)'</i> <i>*London: Published by Vernor & Hood, Booksellers, in the Poultry/ Jas Storer and Jas Greig, Chapel St, Pentonville, May 1,1803</i>	p. 116 Between Q and R
5.	Frontispiece of <i>Cowper Illustrated by a series of Views</i> , showing the summerhouse	James Storer (A) and (E)	COWPER'S SUMMER HOUSE <i>Had I the choice of sublunary good</i> <i>What could I wish that I possess not here?</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p.142 Between T3 and T4

	Subject and position in gathering	Artist (A) and engraver (E)	Inscription	Facing page number:
6.	Olney Bridge	John Greig (A) and (E)	OLNEY BRIDGE <i>'That with its wearisome but needful length Bestrides the winter flood Vide the Task, Book IV'</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p. 176 Between Z and 2A
7.	Pen and ink drawing of Cowper's House in Weston Between AA2 v and BB	John Higgins	Signed on the back, <i>The 'Lodge', Weston Underwood, by John Higgins of Turvey Abbey</i>	p. 185 Between 2A and 2B
8.	The Wilderness	John Greig (A) and (E)	THE WILDERNESS (From the Grove) <i>'here unmolested through whatever sign The sun proceeds, I wander Vide the Task, Book VI'</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p. 186 Between 2B1 and 2B2
9.	Pen and ink drawing WEST AND SOUTH SIDES OF THE OLD HALL AT WESTON UNDERWOOD, BUCKS	Not signed, but presumably John Higgins		p.192 Between 2B and 2C
10.	The Temple in the Wilderness	John Greig (A) and (E)	The Temple in the Wilderness <i>— whose well rolled walks With curvature of slow and easy sweep etc Vide the Task, Book I</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p.196 In centre of gathering, between 2C2 and 2C3

	Subject and position in gathering	Artist (A) and engraver (E)	Inscription	Facing page number:
11.	Weston House	John Greig (A) and (E)	WESTON HOUSE <i>(From The Grove)</i> <i>The seat of George Courtenay Esqr</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p.200 Between 2C and 2D
12.	View from the Alcove	James Storer (A) and (E)	VIEW FROM THE ALCOVE <i>'Now roves the eye</i> <i>And, posted on this speculative height</i> <i>Exults in its command</i> <i>Vide The Task, Book I'</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p.204 In centre of gathering between 2D2 and 2D3
13.	The Peasant's Nest	John Greig (A) and (E)	THE PEASANT'S NEST <i>'Oft have I wished the peaceful covert mine</i> <i>Vide the Task, Book I'</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p.226 Between 2G1 and 2G2
14.	Weston Lodge	James Storer (A) and (E)	WESTON LODGE <i>The Residence of the late Wm. Cowper Esqr.</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p.228 Between 2G2 and 2G3
15	The Shrubbery	James Storer (A) and (E)	THE SHRUBBERY <i>'The Saint or Moralist should tread</i> <i>This Moss grown Alley –</i> <i>Cowper</i> <i>- Vide the Shrubbery, Vol I'</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p.234 Between 2H1 and 2H2
16.	Pen and ink drawing NORTH FRONT OF THE OLD HALL AT WESTON UNDERWOOD	Signed on reverse John Higgins		p.246 Between 2I3 and 2I4

	Subject and position in gathering	Artist (A) and engraver (E)	Inscription	Facing page number:
17.	pen and ink drawing WEST SIDE OF THE OLD HALL AT WESTON UNDERWOOD	Signed on reverse John Higgins		p.248 Between 2I and 2K
18.	The Rustic Bridge	James Storer (A) and (E)	THE RUSTIC BRIDGE <i>'Upon a rustic bridge We pass a gulph Vide the Task, Book I'</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p.260 Between 2L2 and 2L3
19.	Pen and ink drawing SOUTH FRONT OF THE HALL AT WESTON UNDERWOOD, BUCKS	Signed on reverse John Higgins		p.262 Between 2L3 and 2L4
20.	pen and ink drawing EAST SIDE OF THE HALL AT WESTON UNDERWOOD, BUCKS	Not signed, but presumably John Higgins		p.287 Between 2O3 and 2O4
21.	The Alcove from the Avenue	James Storer (A) and (E)	THE ALCOVE FROM THE AVENUE <i>'How airy and how light the graceful arch Vide the Task, Book I'</i> <i>*London: (as above)</i>	p.310 Between 2R3 and 2R4
22.	The Elms	John Greig (A) and (E)	THE ELMS <i>... there, fast rooted in their bank</i>	p.322

	Subject and position in gathering	Artist (A) and engraver (E)	Inscription	Facing page number:
			<i>Stand never overlook'd our fav'rite elms That screen the herdsman's solitary hut Vide the Task, Book I</i> <i>*As above</i>	Between 2T1 and 2T2
	VOLUME II			
23.	Frontispiece portrait of Cowper	T Lawrence (A) and William Blake (E), dated 1802	<i>T. Lawrence RA ad vivum del. 1793</i>	
24.	A View of St Edmund's Chapel ...	Francis Stone (A) and William Blake (E)	A View of St Edmund's Chapel In the Church of East Dereham, containing the Grave of William Cowper Esq <i>Publish'd by J. Johnson, St Pauls, 25 March 1804.</i>	p.220
25.	Cowper's Monument	Model by Flaxman, William Blake (A) and (E)	<i>A Sketch of the Monument Erected in the Church of East Dereham in Norfolk in Memory of William Cowper Esqre Etch'd by W Blake from the original Model by John Flaxman Esq. Sculptor to his Majesty</i> <i>Publish'd by J. Johnson, St Pauls, 25 March 1804.</i>	p.221
26.	MOTTO ON A CLOCK etching	William Blake (A) and (E)	(Drawing of the weather-house and Cowper's hares Puss, Tiney and Bess) <i>Publish'd by J. Johnson, St Pauls, 25 March 1804.</i>	
	VOLUME III			
	No frontispiece and no pictures			

Appendix C: Estimated cost for printing 1250 copies of the quarto edition of *The Life of Cowper, 1803*— see page 59.

Based on the figures supplied by Longman's to Parliament in 1818, for producing a quarto edition of 250 copies and excluding overheads and any payment to the author.¹⁴⁶

Manufacturing costs of 250 copies, 1818	Price in shillings	(Price in £ s d)	Percent of total cost
Setting the type	1610	£80 10s	33%
Paper	1,110	£55 10s	23%
Pressing	530	£26 10s	11%
Boarding	380	£19	8%
Advertising and other selling costs	1200	£60	25%
Total costs	4,830	£241 10s	100%
Unit cost	19.32	£0 19s	

Using Longman's figures, we can speculate on the minimum sums required to produce 1250 copies of *The Life of Cowper* in 1803. There were two quarto volumes so Longman's figures are doubled.

Manufacturing costs of 1250 copies, 1803	Price in shillings	Price in £	Note
Setting the type	3,220	£161	Fixed cost, for 250 or 1250 copies – probably higher as the text included poetry and quotations
Paper:	11,100	£555	If paper for 250 copies cost £55 10s, cost of 1250 is five times that figure, and double for two volumes
Pressing	5,300	£265	ditto
Boarding	3,800	£190	ditto
Advertising and other selling costs	1200	£60	Fixed cost for 250 or 1250 copies
Plates engraved by Blake: fee unknown	1000	£50	Fees determined by size of plate and complexity ¹⁴⁷
Carriage from the country	200	£10	
Minimum total cost, minus overheads and payment to author	25,820	£1291	Calculated on 1150 copies to allow for 100 presentation copies
Nominal unit cost	22.45	£1 1s 6d	

¹⁴⁶ St Clair, p.506.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Phillips, *William Blake, Apprentice and Master* (Oxford: Ashmolean, 2014), p.81

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