Rachel Crawford examines the intriguing, often problematic, relationship between poetry and landscape in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. Crawford focuses on the gradual change during this period from the British taste for open space to a preference for confined space, so that by the beginning of the Regency period contained sites, both topographical and poetic, were perceived to express authentic English qualities. In this context, Crawford discusses the highly fraught parliamentary enclosure movement which closed off the last of England’s open fields between 1760 and 1815. She takes enclosure as a prevailing metaphor for a reconceptualization of the aesthetics of space in which enclosed and confined sites became associated with productivity; and sets explicit images, such as the apple, the iron industry, and the kitchen garden within the context of georgic and minor lyric poetry.

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POETRY, ENCLOSURE, AND THE VERNACULAR LANDSCAPE, 1700–1830

RACHEL CRAWFORD
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# Contents

*List of illustrations*  page ix

*Preface*  page xi

**PART ONE  REPRESENTATIONAL SPACES**

1  Introduction: expansion and contraction  page 3

2  Codifying containment: the parliamentary enclosures  page 37

3  Altering the prospects: Switzer, Whately, and Repton  page 65

**PART TWO  THE POETRY OF EARTH**

4  English georgic and British nationhood  page 91

5  Philips’s *Cyder*: Englishing the apple  page 114

6  Jago’s *Edge-Hill*: simulation and representation  page 138

**PART THREE  INFINITUDE CONFINED**

7  Lyric art  page 169

8  The kitchen-garden manual  page 194

9  The poetics of the bower: Keats, Coleridge, and Hemans  page 225

**PART FOUR  CONCLUSION**

10  Conclusion  page 253

*Notes*  page 256

*Bibliography*  page 287

*Index*  page 393
Illustrations

1 “Burlington House in Pickadilly,” J. Kip and L. Knyff, *Britannia Illustrata* (1714), vol. i, Plate 29, RB 204533. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

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List of illustrations

9 “The Prospect of Nottingham,” J. Kip and L. Knyff, Britannia Illustrata (1714), vol. 1, plate 75, RB 204533. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. 179

10 Chiswick House, Middlesex, J. Kip and L. Knyff, Britannia Illustrata (1714), vol. 1, plate 30, RB 204533. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. 180

11 Chelsea and the Neathouse Gardens, J. Rocque, Survey of London (1746), plates 10 and 7, RB 315661. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. 181

12 “Plan of a Kitchen or Fruit-Garden,” Stephen Switzer, Practical Fruit-Gardner (1724), between pages 306/307, RB130338. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. 196

13 “Design of an Elegant Kitchen Garden,” Batty Langley, New Principles of Gardening (1728), fourth folded plan, RB 406726. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. 198

14 Frontispiece, Philip Miller, Gardeners Dictionary (1731), RB 27293. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. 208

15 Frontispiece, Philip Miller, Gardeners Dictionary (1752), Private Collection. 209

16 “Flora at Play with Cupid,” Frontispiece, Erasmus Darwin, The Loves of the Plants (1789), The Botanic Garden, vol. ii, RB 387423. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. 215

17 Four varieties of cucumbers, John Gerarde, Herball (1597), pages 762 and 763, RB 61079. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. 218

18 “The Garden of Boccaccio,” engraving by Engelhart after Thomas Stothard, The Keepsake (1829), between pages 232/233, RB 224377. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. 239
Coleridge is only one of many figures in this study who inhabit the long eighteenth century, yet his presence everywhere informs it. Though he once lightly described his own kinetic mind as “unfortunately little more than a far-stretched Series of Et Ceteras” (*Notebooks*, 3: 4250), his was more accurately, in his own neologism, esemplastic. Though his curiosity ranged over interests as disparate as the Prometheus of Aeschylus and the novels of Ann Radcliffe, landscape aesthetics and a nascent industrial canal system, spiritual purity and recipes for vegetables, his habit was to draw alien things together in reshaping moments of surprise, wit, and affection – a habit he once referred to as a penchant toward “fantastic analogue & similitude” (*Notebooks*, 1: 277). All who have read Coleridge’s notebooks and letters are familiar with his protean mind, yet his own best gift was one he attributed to William Cowper as “divine Chit chat” (*Letters*, 1: 164). This quality of Coleridge’s perhaps more than any other – his genius, his humility, his profound sense of his own psychic depth and loneliness, or his warm humor – has motivated my own work. Coleridge’s familiarization of the divine as chit chat, his habitual tendency to regard the high in terms of the low has helped me to see the alteration of notions of English space in the long eighteenth century in a particular light; for while he may abstract jasmine and myrtle as emblems of innocence and love, it was the potato blossom that appeared to his eye as “the loveliest & richest flower of Gardens” (*Notebooks*, 1: 1476). Referring to Sir Walter Raleigh and “Speculative men,” only Coleridge could conclude, “Good Heavens! Let me never eat a roasted Potatoe without dwelling on it and detailing its train of consequences” (*Notebooks*, 3: 2488). When contemplating heated responses generated by personal disagreement, only he would couch a self-recommendation for preemptive action in terms of the cooling palliative of a plate of cucumbers:
Preface

—in all these cases, write your Letter, vent, & ease yourself, and when you have done it—even as when you have pared, sliced, vinegared, oiled, peppered & salted your plate of Cucumber you are directed to smell to it—& then throw it out of the window—so, dear friend! vinegar, pepper, & salt your Letter, cucumber argument—i.e. cool reasoning—previously sauced with passion & sharpness—then read it—eat it, drink it, smell it, with eyes & ears—(a small catachresis, but never mind)—& then throw it into the fire—(Notebooks, 2: 2379)

Coleridge draws here on a long tradition of folk custom rooted in the Galenic theory of humors and grounded in associations between a common salad vegetable and homeopathic remedy. Coleridge’s eye for the ordinary, for the similitude that reduces abstraction to humble experience even as his mind ceaselessly converted lived experience into abstruse thought, grounds this study. Without presuming to Coleridge’s habit of thought, I also seek the ordinary in lived experience, even as I abstract from the ordinary to define the path that charted English revaluations of space in the long eighteenth century. From kitchen gardeners, coal miners, and ciderists to georgic poets and writers of lyric verse, this study looks to vernacular sites in the eighteenth century as forms which define English prospects—forms which allow us to consider different materials (words and space) in terms of shared social proportion and weight, and to locate changes in the concept of social space in the interstices of topographies and literature.

My guides on this path have been the people in my life who constitute my most ordinary friendships and who keep me tethered to the realities of lived experience. In Coleridge’s own best words, “Like the Gossamer Spider, we may float upon air and seem to fly in mid heaven, but we have spun the slender Thread out of our own fancies, & it is always fastened to something below” (Notebooks, 2: 2166). Whether that something below be the domestic requirements of the home or the privilege of friendship, my best understanding of the texts I read has always arisen out of the everyday—the chance conversation, the serendipitous remark, the ordinary affections of life. Chief of these ordinary affections is Tami Spector, and second only to her is Rose Zimbardo, my genial authority, irascible muse, and faithful mentor. Tim Fulford has been friend, critic, and reader, guide to Herefordshire and jazz, benefactor of time, and more valued than an acknowledgment can express. Added to these are my friends—Susan, Carmen, Eileen, Marg and Coll, Nikki and Liz, Marty and Derek, Rick and Terry, Alan and Paddy, Peter and Rebecca. Our shared meals and cynicisms gave me the balance which only humor can provide. I have been shadowed by my best and most demanding
Preface

ix

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