Combining an analysis of literature and art and including more than seventy illustrations, this book contends that the “domesticated landscape” is a key to understanding women's complex negotiation of private and public life in a period of revolution and transition, 1780–1870. As more women became engaged in horticultural and botanical pursuits, the meaning of gardens – recognized here both as actual sites of pleasure and labor and as conceptual or symbolic spaces – became more complex. Women writers and artists often used the subject matter of gardens to educate their readers, to enter into political and cultural debates, and to signal moments of intellectual and spiritual insight. Gardens functioned as a protected vantage point for women, providing them with a new language and authority to negotiate between domestic space and the larger world. Although this more expansive form of domesticity still highlighted the virtues associated with the feminized home, it also promised a wider field of action, re-centering domesticity outward.

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Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organization, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as “background,” feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

A complete list of titles published will be found at the end of the book.

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WOMEN, LITERATURE, AND THE DOMESTICATED LANDSCAPE: ENGLAND’S DISCIPLES OF FLORA, 1780–1870

JUDITH W. PAGE
ELISE L. SMITH
In memory of our mothers,
Mollie Marcus Wallick
1926–2008
Elise Lawton Isleib
1924–1992,
and
with gratitude to our daughters by birth and marriage,
Rebekah, Hannah, Katy, and Kelly
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Acknowledgements

It is hard to pinpoint exactly when and how this project began. Long-time colleagues and friends, we also share a common passion for the garden – the real gardens that we have both created, the gardens of our respective childhood memories, and gardens as they come to life in a wide range of visual arts and garden writing. Although our homes are in the decidedly intemperate American South – in Mississippi and Florida – we have both aspired to the informal English style of mixed borders. As we focused on our shared fascination with nineteenth-century England and women as creative agents in art and literature, our project began to take shape. We hope that our introduction, and of course the book itself, will reveal the range of scholars who have inspired and influenced our work. We also owe a huge debt to many institutions and people for supporting us along the way and making our collaboration possible.

First, we are deeply grateful to Linda Bree for her interest in this project from the beginning and for leading our book through the various stages from initial consideration to publication at Cambridge. She has been an invaluable editor and mentor. In addition, we thank the entire staff at the Press, especially Elizabeth Hanlon and Josephine Lane, as well as Dame Gillian Beer, the series editor. The two anonymous readers for the Press, who responded to our work generously and constructively, helped to make this book stronger.

In the process of conducting our research, we each crossed the Atlantic several times on trips to libraries. We are particularly grateful to have had access to the following institutions: the British Library, the Chawton House Library, the Botany Library at the Natural History Museum, the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society, the library at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the library at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Philip Norman at the Museum of Garden History (now the Garden Museum) was an important source of valuable information, as was Jean Deathridge at the Bury Record Office, Stuart Tyler at the Suffolk Record Office,
Acknowledgements

Thomas Haggerty at the Bridgeman Art Library, and Maria Singer at the Yale Center for British Art. Judith Page thanks the staff at the Chawton House Library, especially Jacqui Grainger, Sarah Parry, and Corinne Saint, for their generous help during her idyllic month as a fellow there in 2008, which was also made possible through trustees of Chawton House and the efforts of Gillian Dow. Lisa Kasmer, a visiting fellow at Chawton at the same time, enlivened many evenings with conversations about the project. Closer to home, we thank certain key people at the Smathers Libraries of the University of Florida, including Rita Smith, curator of the Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature, Nancy Poehlmann, rare book curator, and John Van Hook, humanities librarian, and at the Millsaps-Wilson Library, Tom Henderson, college librarian, and Jan Allison, public services assistant.

For the financial support that made our research possible, we acknowledge at the University of Florida the Sabbatical Program, the College of Arts and Sciences Term Professorships, as well as travel support from the College and the Department of English. At Millsaps College we are especially grateful to Joe and Kathy Sanderson for their generous endowment of the Sanderson Chair in Arts and Sciences, which has provided funds for research trips and for the illustrations.

Each of us has presented portions of this book for invited talks and conferences along the way, and we particularly thank the following: Southeastern College Art Conference, 2005; British Women Writers Conference, 2006; International Conference on Romanticism, 2007; English Research Seminar, University of Southampton, 2008; Chawton House, New Directions in Austen Studies, 2009; Nineteenth Century Studies Association, 2009 and 2010; and the Irish Society for the Study of Children’s Literature, 2010.

Many friends and scholars have provided their expertise, support, or challenging questions at crucial moments: Gillian Dow, Pamela Gilbert, Elizabeth Helsinger, Leah Hochman, Kari Lokke, Anne MacMaster, Anne Mellor, Greg Miller, William H. Page, Amy Robinson, R. Allen Shoaf, Steven Smith, Gavin Taylor, Maureen Turim, Charlotte Yeldham, and members of the Millsaps Arts and Letters Works-in-Progress group. Judith Page thanks her students in a graduate seminar at the University of Florida on Women and Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century (Fall 2009) for reading parts of the manuscript and enlarging on our ideas in their own work.

Most important, we acknowledge our families. Bill, Jason, Steve, and Matt supported our project wholeheartedly, with unwavering confidence in
its completion. For their love and encouragement, and in recognition of the influence they have had on our work, we dedicate this book to the women in our families: to our daughters by birth and marriage, Rebekah, Hannah, Katy, and Kelly, and to the memory of our mothers, Mollie Marcus Wallick and Elise Lawton Isleib. The writers and artists that we study in the following chapters understood the crucial role that mother-mentors have in the cultivation of their children’s future, and our dedication acknowledges the power of that role in making all of our gardens – and this book – a reality.