My own history explains my fascination with the stories of the nineteenth-century women writer advocates whose texts and experiences are the keynotes of this book. After studying literature as an undergraduate, I went to law school and practiced law for several years before returning to graduate school in English, only to find myself studying law again but from a different perspective. I first had the idea for this book when I was a doctoral student in the Department of English at the University of Iowa. At its completion, I am a law professor at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. I also co-direct a joint degree program in Law and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. My scholarly life is at the intersection of law, literature, and feminism, and it is my hope that this book finds readership across disciplines. As I remind my joint degree students as they struggle to satisfy all of the members of their Master of Arts committees, truly interdisciplinary work is hard to do.

Fortunately, I have had help and encouragement from literary scholars, law scholars, and a few, like me, who are both—all of whom have embraced the promise of interdisciplinary study. This book reflects much early input from my amazing dissertation director, Garrett Stewart. I am deeply grateful to him for encouraging me at every turn and inspiring me with his eloquence. Two other Victorianists at the University of Iowa, Teresa Mangum and Florence Boos, were extremely influential in my studies. Teresa is an outstanding teacher and remains a special mentor and friend. Florence’s vast knowledge of noncanonical texts and lesser-known women writers greatly enriched this study.
I came to the University of Cincinnati College of Law ten years ago with a different scholarly agenda than most law faculty. I wanted to write about law, but also about Frances Trollope, George Eliot, and many women whom my colleagues had never heard anything about. Always, they have been supportive, and I am so appreciative of their genuine enthusiasm for my work. I especially would like to thank the two deans whom I have worked with since coming to the College of Law, Joe Tomain and Louis Bilionis, and my colleagues Emily Houh, Betsy Malloy, Michael Solimine, and Verna Williams for their always-stimulating intellectual engagement, but mostly for their friendship.

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On a personal note, I wish to thank my two boys, Cole and Andrew, for all the joy that they bring to my life. They also have been especially supportive and cooperative in connection with the completion of this book, and for that I owe a debt of gratitude to my own first-grade teacher, and now dear friend, Anne Driscoll. A few months before the sabbatical year during which I planned to finish this manuscript began, she offered me two wonderful pieces of advice. First, create a writing space of my own in my home, one filled with lovely and meaningful things. Inspired by this idea, I purchased a beautiful cherry-wood Victorian writing table, set it in front of a picture window overlooking my small garden, and sat down every day to write on a comfortable chair, upholstered in a finely detailed William Morris fabric. Her second suggestion was to involve my boys in the writing process—and I did. I talked to them about the writing; they asked me about the writing; one of them even started to write a book of his own. “Make
them proud to have a mom who is a woman writer advocate herself,” Anne had encouraged—and that, I hope, I also did.

Other important people in my life contributed to this book’s completion by helping me with other of life’s responsibilities, particularly Shirley Anderson and Vona Ann and Wendell Burbank. Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to thank my parents, Ken and June Kalsem, for simply being who they are. Dad is a quiet, caring man who loves anything I do because I’m doing it. Mom, a retired librarian, gifted me with her love of books. Her favorite sweatshirt quotes Jorge Luis Borges, “I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library.” It is my great pleasure to present her with one more book to catalogue.
