



The Vital Landscape
Nature and the Built Environment in
Nineteenth-Century Britain



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'...thoroughly justifies its author's claim in the presentation of a fresh approach to a complex of issues that in the alembic of his own thinking are transformed into a fascinating perspective....He writes well and clearly, and has shown himself capable of managing the various elements of the analysis. The Vital Landscape looks set to be a work that fulfills no preconceived slot, that tackles an intriguing mix of themes and pulls out of them a fascinating, fresh account of the historical, social and scientific contingencies in which nineteenth-century existence was constructed.'

–Professor John Dixon Hunt University of Pennsylvania

The Vital Landscape explores the arrival of the biological sciences – most notably the sciences of 'life' entailed in studies of botany and zoology, ecology and evolutionary science, physiology and psychology – in the nineteenth century and their impact on architecture and landscape architecture in Great Britain. Specifically, the book explores the idea of the contrived or artificial environment as an object of both scientific speculation and aesthetic reflection. Unlike specialist histories of biological science or environmental thought, this book is unique in locating one source for present-day concerns for the environment and human well-being in debates over proper housing and the growing popularity of domestic and public gardens in the nineteenth century. The book skilfully interweaves architecture and garden history, the history and philosophy of science, plant and animal physiology and human psychology, works of literature, popular science and domestic economy in a story that opens new opportunities for the study of architecture and gardens.

Contents: Preface; Introduction; Primitive huts and wild gardens; Vegetables in forcing-houses, humans in glasshouses; The vital landscape; Elemental existence; Patterns on the landscape; Characterizing life at home; Memory and the garden cemetery; Conclusion: our (dys)functional environment; Notes; Bibliography; Index.

Includes 52 b&w and 6 colour illustrations

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