a sequence of examples or case studies that are only very loosely tied to any overarching historical narrative. Many passages contain lengthy block quotes, sometimes nearly a page long and sometimes almost back-to-back, with the result that the author's own voice often becomes muted, buried under the sheer weight of archival detail. At other times, the author's critical voice seems to disappear behind that of Halprin's own discourse, as when we are repeatedly informed that this or another example of Halprin's design "invited participation." The quantity of examples and thickness of their descriptive detail become inversely proportionate to the analytical clarity of the larger argument, and it is often easy for the reader to miss the forest for the trees. Moreover, because the book is thematically divided into three distinct parts, each with a different narrative and main point, one almost has the sense of reading three separate books on Halprin's work side by side. Each part can easily stand on its own, and there is little sense that the parts build or depend on one another. This tripartite structure is perhaps more reflective of a desire to divide up conveniently a vast amount of material than of an attempt to generate a single, compelling story about Halprin in the context of urban renewal America.

Under the general heading "Introduction," the first part of the book contains a lengthy biographical essay detailing the formative influences and theoretical development of Halprin's work. Hirsch argues here for the significance Halprin's wife, Anna, a successful dancer and choreographer in her own right, in the theoretical development of landscape as choreography. This section certainly provides a useful supplement to what is already known from Halprin's own explanation in *The RSVP Cycles*. However, Anna Halprin's role largely disappears in the sections that follow, titled "Built Work" and "Community Workshops," in which various partners and designers within Halprin's firm become much more prominent.

"Built Work" consists of a roughly chronological assessment of Halprin's urban projects, beginning with Ghirardelli Square (1962–65) and Market Street in San Francisco (1962–75) and ending with Seattle Freeway Park (1976) and Manhattan Square Park in Rochester, New York

(1975). Urban renewal appears in this section mainly as a peripheral context for these examples. In some cases, such as the sequence of designs for Portland, Oregon, Halprin's firm played the role of ameliorating the alienating conditions of an existing urban renewal project. Likewise, Seattle's Freeway Park was intended to "heal" the condition of a freeway cutting through the heart of the city. In such projects, Halprin's designs served to soften, or "humanize," urban renewal. In other cases, such as the design for Rochester, Halprin's work was supposed to act as the generating core for an urban renewal development that never materialized. However, most of Hirsch's analysis here has to do with Halprin's aesthetic intentions, recounting his transition from designing shopping mall landscapes for Victor Gruen to designing large, often spectacular abstractions of rivers, cliffs, and waterfalls intended to create interactive urban environments that brought metaphors and experiential equivalents of nature into the midst of the city. Despite the particularity of Halprin's imagery, there are formal and rhetorical echoes here of both British Townscape designs and Garrett Eckbo's work for Victor Gruen at the Fullerton Mall in Fresno.

It is only in the final part of the book, "Community Workshops," that a more detailed and critical examination of urban renewal and its politics emerges. In chapter 5, titled "Facilitation and/or Manipulation: The Challenges of Taking Part in Fort Worth, Everett, Charlottesville, and Cleveland," Hirsch explains how Halprin and his firm orchestrated participatory planning workshops in order to arrive at conclusions closely matching the firm's preconceived ideas of the design issues and corresponding solutions while at the same time forestalling grassroots resistance by appearing to derive the designs from popular consensus. Thus, by "choreographing" the ideas and movements of a selective cross section of the urban population, Halprin could reconcile the pluralism and awareness of social difference that increasingly marked the tumultuous politics of the 1960s and 1970s with the universalism that was key to his aesthetic ideology. While one might wish that these and similar critical insights had been woven into a more coherent narrative project for the book as a whole, it could be argued that the extensiveness and relative

"open-endedness" of the author's engagement with the Halprin archive provides plentiful fodder to be taken up by future historians.

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ANTHONY RAYNSFORD
*San José State University*

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## Notes

**1.** Lawrence Halprin, *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes and the Human Environment* (New York: George Braziller, 1970); Lawrence Halprin and Jim Burns, *Taking Part: A Workshop Approach to Collective Creativity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1974).
**2.** Lawrence Halprin, *A Life Spent Changing Places* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

Timothy Brittain-Catlin
**Bleak Houses: Disappointment and Failure in Architecture**

The argument of *Bleak Houses* is deceptively simple. Architecture past and present is divided into two categories: success and failure (or "winners" and "losers"). Architectural historians and critics have focused their violent attention on success at the expense of narrating failure in a sensitive and subtle way. They should now do the latter, because this will lead to a more nuanced architectural discourse accessible to a broad public and may therefore also lead to more humane, beautiful architecture in the future.

On the surface of it, this seems an appealing, graciously liberal argument, and it would seem that Timothy Brittain-Catlin is in good company. Successive generations of architectural historians and critics, laboring under the burden of the narrow modernisms of their forefathers (and a few foremothers), have struggled in myriad ways to break open the somehow sharply defined boundaries of the canon of architectural history in search of a broader and more inclusive discourse.[1]

But *Bleak Houses* is a more complicated, and more frustrating, piece of writing than this. Brittain-Catlin pursues the argument sketched out above through a chaotic mash-up of genres of critical, biographical, and historical writing. One finds here not

only moving pocket histories and biographies of "sad" buildings and their long-suffering architects but also passionately worded attacks on architectural historians and critics, first-person travelogues, and memoir. Amid this clutter, it is nonetheless clear that the subgenre of the "failure memoir" serves as the Trojan horse to deliver Brittain-Catlin's liberal manifesto. Without an understanding of this move, there is no way to explain the deep flaws in his argument. As Giles Harvey, a journalist and editor at the *New Yorker*, has already diagnosed, the failure memoir is a publishing house–driven phenomenon in which misery and company are profitably connected on a mass scale.[2]

Following the rules of the subgenre, Brittain-Catlin's narrated perception of his own misery and failure is the frame for a diagnosis of a *universal* condition of misery and failure. Not even Freud was so bold. The book's first line: "When I returned to England in the middle of the year 2000, after nearly ten years abroad, I discovered that I had become a loser" (1). From the last page: "The feeling that I had every morning when the sun rose yet again magnificent . . . was that perhaps there would eventually be a chance to get things right, that I would be recognized; and yet nothing seemed to happen" (152). Such statements are not only intended to connect the author with those forgotten or maligned past figures about whom he writes, but they are also naked appeals to the reader to sympathize with his plight, to see themselves *and others* in his self-image and in the narrative images he produces of pathetic past architects.

This rhetorical tactic sits uneasily with the more sweeping tone of the rest of the book. The title *Bleak Houses* is meant as a play on the title of Charles Dickens's masterpiece. There is little point in rehearsing here the intended irony proposed by juxtaposing *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce* with Pugin's *Contrasts* as two roughly coeval historical horizons of economic and aesthetic judgment, except to say that Brittain-Catlin hopes to achieve, à la Dickens, a set of reforms in the court of public opinion. The aim is to recover the biographies of the architectural "losers" because they might offer "a wide range of experiences for those who want to get to know buildings better" and "ways of looking at buildings that can

relate much more closely to our own experiences, and give a more accurate picture of the relationship between architecture and the rest of our culture than the old ways" (21). Who doesn't have a nasty thought for the excesses of modernist historiography? Yet there's the rub, front and center: Brittain-Catlin cannot escape the language of judgment—"better," "more accurate," just plain right—that he pretends to abhor for its destructive insensitivity.

Brittain-Catlin's clever but shallow refusal to engage directly with the merits and demerits of modernist historiography and subsequent critiques of that historiography will perhaps allow his book to seem reasonable, even sympathetic, to the unwary reader—particularly to the beginning student in architecture school, to whom, I expect, this book will all too often be recommended. But there is no escaping that even if it is true that Tudor architecture has been at times unjustly mocked by various modernist critics as a straw man, it is certainly untrue that, as one chapter subheading asserts, "all critics hate Tudor architecture" (54).[3]

*Bleak Houses* is not only a disappointed and wistful text, but it is also an *angry* book. It is full of sexist language and painful analogies—"half-Gothic," "half-Tudor" buildings are "transgendered," apparently (57)—and it is probably best not to mention class lest I be accused of being nasty. Brittain-Catlin reserves particular scorn, however, for "architectural critics" and "conventional architectural historians."

Teasing out whom it is that he is talking about is often difficult. He rarely names or quotes his villains, even if he does take down some easy targets by proper names. But in this book there are always "*people*," apparently legion, who are "rude," ruthlessly singling out individual architects for criticism of the judgmental and negative kind, and thus destroying their lives and dooming their works. Worse, for Brittain-Catlin, are those architectural writers who wish to politicize architecture for their own personal gain. Certainly such "people" merit our scorn, but it is hard for me to understand the relevance of the point, given that I ascribe to a commonsense and widely shared view of history that sees politics as produced through events and "people" rather than something that is only projected—selfishly and arbitrarily—backward

onto events, let alone individuals, by critics or historians.

As for said historians, Brittain-Catlin tends to attack us (and, presumably, himself) via proxies. As usual, violence begets violence. Brittain-Catlin offers, with no documentary evidence or serious analysis, a shockingly ignorant evaluation of the Smithsons—whose work he dismisses as "locker-room intimidation, really; cock-flashing" (81)—because of their interest in a sophisticated combination of influences that resulted in what would become known as "the New Brutalism" at the expense of a putatively humanistic "Scandinavianism" that interests him.

Perhaps most mischievous is his willful misreading, late in the book, of New Urbanism as "a matter of taste, that is all, not of principle" (141) and as "a noble retrenchment from the pain of real life which seems to have ended, mainly, in a great deal of paper and very little else" (144). One has to wonder whether Brittain-Catlin has thought much about the real stakes of suburbanization and downscaling of social housing projects on both sides of the Anglophone Atlantic, the cartoonish "neoclassicism" or context-free vernacularism of shopping centers, the cloistered garishness of "gated communities," or any of the other fungible stage sets for consumer capitalism that have become the modus operandi of twenty-first-century neoliberal real estate development. This is a core problem with the winner/loser logic of his account. Since the winners receive no direct analysis, there is no serious basis for the ethic of judgment in Brittain-Catlin's illusion of a post-Pugin world. Perhaps if Brittain-Catlin did not just dismiss architectural criticism and history as the bleating of self-serving bullies, he might find much to admire *and* criticize in an architectural historical and critical culture struggling ingenuously—if always already too late—with the complexity of narrating the relationships between theory and practice; among the have-a-lots, the have-somes, and the have-nots; and between corporate entities and "individuals."

In his willingness to surrender critical apparatus in favor of a narcissistic aesthetic of personal autonomy and melancholy affect, Brittain-Catlin offers us the crypto-historical reverse of the "postcritical" or

"projective" coin. In search of "a quieter and more modest way of looking at and interpreting buildings" (5), one that would be in keeping with his own "loser" status, he unwittingly reproduces the violence of the so-called winners and then cracks up. Oedipus, eat your heart out.

JOHN HARWOOD
*Oberlin College*

### Notes

**1.** The debates on this topic have seen memorable passages of argument appear in the pages of this journal. See, for example, John Maass, "Where Architectural Historians Fear to Tread," *JSAH* 28, no. 1 (Mar. 1969), 3–8; Diane Harris, "That's Not Architectural History! Or, What's a Discipline For?," *JSAH* 70, no. 2 (June 2011), 149–52.
**2.** See Giles Harvey, "Cry Me a River: The Rise of the Failure Memoir," *New Yorker*, 25 Mar. 2013, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/03/25/cry-me-a-river (accessed 1 July 2015). The classic entries in this genre in modern Anglophone literature are undoubtedly F. Scott Fitzgerald's three essays in *The Crack-Up* (New York: New Directions Books, 1945).
**3.** This misstatement is indicative of a loose attitude toward fact throughout the book. Brittain-Catlin repeatedly cites archival documents and published collections of letters without quoting from them in his text or in the endnotes or providing due context; see the introduction's note 1 for the first example (153).

Nikhil Rao
**House, but No Garden: Apartment Living in Bombay's Suburbs, 1898–1964**

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013, 312 pp., 2 tables, 53 b/w illus. $90 (cloth), ISBN 9780816678129; $30 (paper), ISBN 9780816678136

Of all the cities founded by the British in the colonial era, Bombay (now known as Mumbai) has most captured the imagination of writers. Over the past decade or so it has served as one of the primary subjects of a rich body of scholarship that vastly expands our understanding of the complexities of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial cities in South Asia. This scholarship shows the important role of local populations in the making, imagining, and inhabiting of the colonial city, thus not only providing compelling insights into the architecture and urbanism of this era but also adding nuance to our understanding of colonial processes that shaped the urban environment. Nikhil Rao's *House, but No Garden*, which focuses on the construction and inhabitation of apartments as a new residential mode of dwelling as well as on global processes of suburbanization, is an important contribution to this emerging body of research.

Rao's book reveals that the events associated with Bombay's suburbanization in the twentieth century are vital to our understanding of urban land management, apartment dwelling's role in the creation of middle-class identities and meta-identities, and the contemporary city. This work is significant for several reasons. First, it spans the period from 1898 to 1964, straddling the colonial and postcolonial eras (India became independent in 1947) and thus encompassing a part of the twentieth century that is relatively understudied in Indian cities. Many urban histories end around 1918, and anthropologists and sociologists often focus on the contemporary city. Urban historians writing about colonial Bombay prior to 1918 are referring to a limited geographical area of about 22 square miles in the southern third of the island of Bombay; in that period the northern third of the island remained undeveloped. In contrast, scholars writing on the contemporary city refer to Greater Mumbai, a vast region of about 186 square miles that spills far beyond the limits of the island city. Spatially and temporally, Rao's work on suburbanization thus helps to bridge the scholarly divide between the colonial city before 1918 and today's Greater Mumbai.

Second, the book is significant because it offers the first substantive study of suburbanization in South Asia that attempts to challenge the commonly held assumption that suburbs populated by elites were typical only of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Anglo-America, while squatter settlements housing the underclasses were established in peripheral areas in the developing world. Rao contends that apartment living and other institutions and norms initiated in the suburbs influenced the older sections of the city of Bombay and, later, Greater Mumbai, so that they did not follow the pattern of low-rise single-family homes in suburban developments:

Rather than playing a subordinate role to the city, the suburbs *pioneered* many fundamental elements of the modern city of Bombay, elements that then made their way back to the older parts of the city. Physical forms of dwelling such as the apartment building, institutions such as the cooperative housing society, and metacaste forms of identity such as the South Indian—now essential attributes of the city called Greater Mumbai—were all initiated and elaborated in the suburbs of Bombay before making their way back into the city. (12)

Rao shows how apartment living became the most characteristic element of Bombay's expansion from 1918 to 1960. By the 1920s, apartment living in the suburbs rather than residence in tenement buildings in the city distinguished upper-caste, lower-middle-class identities. This work demonstrates not only how communities create ethnic institutions in neighborhoods but also how neighborhoods influence the creation of new forms of large urban community identities. The book is significant also because it enhances our understanding of the complexities of urban land in Bombay and how those complexities contributed to the shaping of the urban and suburban landscapes.

Rao's study is based on archival and library research, supported by ethnography and oral histories. The book is organized into an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction does a good job of laying out significant themes and contributions and outlining the central arguments of individual chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on land in discussing the creation of the suburban landscape of Dadar–Matunga–Sion by the Bombay City Improvement Trust, which was founded in 1898 as a response to the 1896 Bombay plague epidemic. Initially, the Improvement Trust concentrated its activities on improvement projects within the city, where it faced significant opposition from landholders as it attempted to obtain the land necessary to execute its schemes. Land speculation, the complexity of land tenure systems and property rights, and a lack of clarity regarding how to determine the price of land also contributed to the Trust's difficulties. Given the problems associated with land acquisition in the city, the Trust pivoted in 1909 to a strategy of "indirect attack," taking