

# Houses of Ill Repute

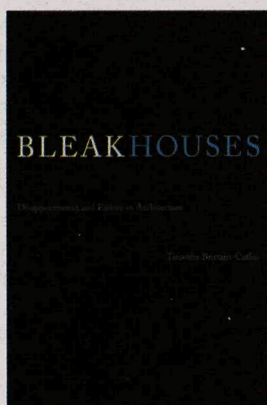
Brittain-Catlin, Timothy.

**Bleak Houses: Disappointment and Failure in Architecture.**

MIT. 2014. 192p. illus. notes. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780262026697. \$24.95; ebk. ISBN 9780262321259.

ARCH

Brittain-Catlin (senior lecturer, Kent Sch. of Architecture) looks at lost, neglected, and modified designs of England's forgotten architects, referring to them as "losers" throughout. He postulates that most writing on architectural history is ineffective since it returns repeatedly to the best examples of successful architecture but fails to give critical attention to lesser-known buildings. Looking mainly at structures of the last century to the present the author describes how the lack of conversation about architecture has resulted in pervasive bad design. "Loser" architects cannot relate to the lofty ideals of conventional criticism so they go in their own directions, producing ugly constructs with undisciplined designs. Readers of this book may want to consider Douglas Murphy's *Architecture of Failure*, which references Victorian glass and iron design as an archetype for the recurring faults of architects to



produce lasting innovation. This title is difficult to follow because of the author's wordiness and use of run-on sentences; nevertheless, Brittain-Catlin makes a good case for reevaluating the quality of architectural criticism. **VERDICT** Architecture faculty and practicing architects will find this book to be a valuable source of professional discussion.—Eric G. Linderman, Euclid P.L., OH

Hubka, Thomas C. **Houses Without Names: Architectural Nomenclature and the Classification of America's Common Houses.** Univ. of Tennessee. (Vernacular Architecture Studies). 2013. 112p. illus. notes. index. ISBN 9781572339477. pap. \$29.95. ARCH

This is one title in a series of books produced by

the Vernacular Architecture Forum. It is a reasoned explanation for developing definitions for common domestic homes in the United States, with a call for the public, students, and architectural historians to use the theories set forth to conduct a census of regional homes. In order to develop a common descriptive language for homes, Hubka (*Resplendent Synagogue: Architecture and Worship in an Eighteenth-Century Polish Community*) argues that a residence should be identified by its outside features as well as its interior layout. The work includes small black-and-white photographs of exteriors and diagrams of floor plans. A set of representative blueprints is supplied with the author's universal term describing groups of floor plans. For example, homes built between 1800 and 2000 can be primarily classified into these groupings: suburban; minimal-traditional; manufactured home; split-level; and ranch. **VERDICT** This book is for readers interested in domestic architecture in the United States and for those who want to create a classification scheme and conduct a census of common homes.—Valerie Nye, Coll. of Santa Fe, NM

tled *The Age of Nothing*), this is not so much an attack on religion or a defense of atheism as it is a chronicle of the myriad ways in which people have attempted to answer the question of how to find meaning since Friedrich Nietzsche famously declared that "God is dead" in 1882. Although challenging, this very readable survey covers artists, novelists, dramatists, poets, scientists, psychologists, philosophers, and more. Watson takes readers on a whirlwind tour that includes major figures from the past 130 years—Virginia Woolf, Pablo Picasso, Sigmund Freud, and Wallace Stevens, up through Richard Dawkins and Ronald Dworkin, among many others. **VERDICT** Although there were times when, ironically, this reviewer wished for Watson to neatly tie some of the innumerable threads of thought together, his intended purpose is more to point, map, and chronicle them. In this, the author has provided an accessible entryway into an immense body of knowledge that curious readers will be inspired to pursue further.—Brian Sullivan, Alfred Univ. Lib., NY

## SPORTS & RECREATION

Feinstein, John. **Where Nobody Knows Your Name: Life in the Minor Leagues of Baseball.** Doubleday. 2014. 384p. index. ISBN 9780385535939. \$26.95; ebk. ISBN 9780385535946. SPORTS

With firsthand interviews and an omniscient presence, Feinstein (*Washington Post* columnist; *Season on the Brink*) chronicles a diverse range of personalities experiencing the grind of a minor league season and sharing an ambition to reach the majors. The author believes poignant sporting narratives are not made by recounting the lives of immortal players or legendary events, but rather by portraying "the guys who love their games, even though they often fail while playing them." And it is these unheralded individuals Feinstein depicts. For highly touted prospects, the minors are a temporary initiation to the rigors of professional baseball before reaching the majors. Yet, for most, these leagues are an inescapable reality of brief call-ups and a constant revolving door between organizations. **VERDICT** Feinstein accomplishes more than revealing an aspect of baseball that many fans overlook or relegate to a subsidiary of the major leagues. He presents relatable characters whose dedication and sacrifice create empathy. While primarily recommended to baseball fans for its survey of a misunderstood aspect of the sport, all readers may gain inspiration from the perseverance of underdogs pursuing a lifelong passion.—Stephen Arougheti, Arizona State Univ., Phoenix

ginnings of the closing of the canon for both Jews and Christians (third century CE). He provides a treasury of historical highlights, biblical backstories, and details of textual production as well as a sweeping overview of the struggles within Judaism and Christianity to establish the bases of their own spiritual authority. This far-too-seldom-studied area of biblical history deserves this attention and Satlow's effort does not disappoint. For those wanting more the extensive bibliography points the way. **VERDICT** Satlow serves as the best sort of tour guide to the history of this book

called the Bible.—Sandra Collins, Byzantine Catholic Seminary Lib., Pittsburgh

Watson, Peter. **The Age of Atheists: How We Have Sought To Live Since the Death of God.** S. & S. 2014. 512p. notes. index. ISBN 9781476754314. \$35; ebk. ISBN 9781476754338. REL

The breathtakingly vast scope of intellectual historian Watson's ridiculously ambitious narrative is reminiscent of his previous works *Ideas* and *The Modern Mind*. Despite the misleading American title (the British edition was more appropriately ti-

Copyright of Library Journal is the property of Media Source, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.