

Robert Fogelson, Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870–1930

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Robert Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870–1930*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005, 264 pages, US\$22.00 paperback.

Forgive me if I interpret *Bourgeois Nightmares* as an exercise in the reclamation of lapsed social memory, especially in our own time of emergent terrorism (real and imagined), xenophobia, homophobia, agoraphobia, immigration intolerance, and a general backsliding of civil liberties. I read Robert Fogelson's elaboration of the cultural and legal implementation of restrictive covenants by subdividers, city planners, individuals, property-owner associations, judges and state officials as an apposite demonstration of the historical enthusiasm of freedom-loving Americans (and Canadians) for self-imposed curtailments of their personal and collective freedoms, in the name of spatial and social certainty. If anything, Fogelson reminds us in his little book that our recent zeal for rescinding public liberty has a rather mundane and predictable antecedent: the bourgeois construction of everyday suburban living. Of course, whether urban historians will accept Fogelson's insistence they have 'missed something central not only to the history of suburbia but also to the history of American society' (p. 4), or even acknowledge he is really saying something new, remains to be seen (given work such as Steven Wilder's *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn* (Columbia University Press, 2000)). None, however, will deny the timeliness of the publication.

Neither will they overlook the writing. This is a book you should enjoy reading, in part because Fogelson's is not a typical history of suburbs. In one sense, it is not about suburbs at all, but rather an elucidation of bourgeois 'fears of almost everyone and everything' (p. 117) and the resulting milieu of restriction that blossomed under in-migration-pressures on suburban spaces and social relations. Having said this, it is also true that Fogelson largely reiterates, implicitly, an argument Richard Harris and Robert Lewis (The geography of North American cities and suburbs, 1900–1950, *Journal of Urban History* 27 (2001) 263) make in what they describe as a controversial article: the fragmentation of municipal governments allowed all sorts of people to settle on the urban fringe, a challenge to the 'social exclusivity of suburbs' thesis. As we see repeatedly in *Bourgeois Nightmares*, the turn-of-the-twentieth-century bourgeois suburbanite compunction to delimit spatial and social freedoms suggests a pervasive *petit bourgeois* threat to *haute bourgeois* aesthetics and aspirations, a condition that must have existed if the Harris and Lewis idea of a 'blurred...line between city and suburb' obtained.

Accordingly, Fogelson attends to the perceived bourgeois need for the restrictive covenant or deed restriction, focusing on the suburban in-migration of "undesirable" people and activities' (p. 123), of 'butchers and bakers and tinkers and dramsellers', and of the "mechanics and laborers" and the 'cheap tenement[s] and boarding houses' in which they live' (p. 40). Yes, certain aristocrats and *haute bourgeois* (the property owners in Llewellyn Park, Short Hills or Tuxedo Park for example) lived exclusive and exclusionary suburban lives. However, for the suburban bourgeois concerned to ape a lifestyle of privilege, or merely to better accommodate the dispiriting daily trip to the proliferating industry and commerce on the urban fringe, the restrictive covenant placed numerous limits on the manner in which a variety of suburbanites disposed their property.

What was the nature of these limitations? Fogelson identifies numerous restrictions: minimum cost requirements; design reviews; fence, hedge, sign and billboard controls; domestic animal prohibitions; quarrying, mining and drilling constraints; construction time limits and controls on occupying the house before completion; no burning of bituminous or heavy smoke producing fuels;

no clotheslines, and, of course, exclusions of undesirable people. The unfortunate latter could be anyone not definitively ‘Caucasian’ or ‘white only’: ‘Negroes’ and ‘Semites’ and ‘Mongolians’ and ‘Dagos’ of all kinds, Armenians, Mexicans, Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, American Indians, but also Irish, Italians, Greeks, Austrians, Russians, Poles, Slavs, or Roumanians (pp. 95–103). A caustic social dysfunction in the form of Jim Crowe (the name given to the segregation and disenfranchisement policies that caused the persecution and terrorization of black Americans following the abrogation of the Civil Rights Act of 1875) and the Ku Klux Klan resonated with ‘subdividers and their prospective purchasers’. Widespread racism caused many of both ‘to believe that the presence of even one or two African- or Asian-American families in an otherwise stable residential neighborhood would drive out the whites—and seal its fate’ (p. 127).

Curiously, all this restriction of people and property did not create a determinate system of constraint because subdividers were ‘reluctant to broaden the definitions of ‘undesirable’ people and activities’ to create one (pp. 194–195). Rather, they feared building absolute bourgeois utopias using the stringent control instruments available. Why? Market competition. Assiduity in the devising and applying of restrictive covenants threatened the incomes of subdividers, urging instead a ‘safe middle-course’ of restriction (p. 199). Perhaps such an arid, pecuniary instrumental rationalism bodes well for our degenerating public life. I can only imagine angst in high places as the security of the homeland wrestles apocalyptically with the bottom line.

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Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Economy*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2004, 385 pages, US\$20 paperback.

This book challenges the naive notion of ‘gentlemanly capitalist development’ of the Indian empire and contradicts Bowen’s claim, in his *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756–1833* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), that the Indian empire was the creation of the East India Company; a private commercial undertaking and not that of a state-sponsored imperial project. This book provides an original, groundbreaking approach to understanding the historical geography of Indian nationalism by excavating and delineating the spatial referents of the colonial economy and its eventual transition to a national economy. Goswami recasts the complex dynamic between colonialism and nationalism from a global and historical–geographical perspective in order to provide an analysis of the contradictions of colonialism. Going against the grain of methodological nationalism the book traces the socio-cultural, political, economic and global transformations that made possible nationalist imaginings of India – Bharat as a bounded national space and economy. It presents a novel account of the emergence of the contradictory character of Indian nationalism. There are eight chapters apart from an introduction and conclusion and a rich documentation of footnotes and additional references.

The chapter ‘Geographies of State Transformation: The Production of Colonial State Space’ shows how contradictory policies by colonial regimes attempted to modernise the social body of India and at the same time maintain and perpetuate its imagined and timeless tradition. The

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. 264 pp. Notes, index. Cloth, \$30.00. By Robert M. Fogelson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. 264 pp. Notes, index. Cloth, \$30.00. Abstract views reflect the number of visits to the article landing page. Total abstract views: 0 *. Loading metrics

Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870-1930. Robert M. Fogelson. Copyright Date: 2005. Published by: Yale University Press. Pages: 272. As Fogelson reveals, suburban subdividers attempted to cope with the deep-seated fears of unwanted change, especially the encroachment of "undesirable" people and activities, by imposing a wide range of restrictions on the lots. These restrictions ranged from mandating minimum costs and architectural styles for the houses to forbidding the owners to sell or lease their property to any member of a host of racial, ethnic, and religious groups. These restrictions, many of which are still commonly employed, tell us as much about the complexities of American society today as about its complexities

Robert M. Fogelson. Yale University Press
New Haven and London. Frontispiece: Subdivision plan, Palos Verdes Estates, California, ca. 1920s Part illustration: Billboard in the Country Club District, Kansas City (ca. 1910s), J. C. Nichols Company Scrapbooks (K1910s), Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri-Kansas City Archives Part illustration: From Gasoline Stations or Brendonwood (promotional brochure, ca. 1920s), Loeb Library, Harvard University Copyright © 2005 by Robert M. Fogelson. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books Inc. Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Fogelson, Robert M. *Bourgeois nightmares : suburbia* / Robert M. Fogelson. p. cm. By Robert M. Fogelson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. 264 pp. Notes, index. Cloth, \$30.00. ISBN: 0-300-10876-1. Kenneth T. Jackson. *Business History Review*, 2007, vol. 81, issue 4, 808-809. Date: 2007 References: Add references at CitEc Citations: Track citations by RSS feed. Downloads: (external link) https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/type/journal_article link to article abstract page (text/html). More articles in *Business History Review* from Cambridge University Press Cambridge University Press, UPH, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8BS UK. Bibliographic data for series maintained by Keith Waters. (). Share. By Robert Fogelson (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005) 264 pp. \$30.00. June 2006. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 37(1):149-150. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36.1 (2005) 76-77 Historians take stock of what they know chiefly during comprehensive exams or when focusing on new research projects. This volume of essays by leading scholars offers a shorter way to take stock of current scholarship, at least for the historiography of the "long nineteenth century" of scientific enterprise. This period of re-definitions and significant re-conceptualizations about the study of the natural world was analyzed comprehensively by Merz, Bernal, and Ben-David, whose overarching themes continue to intrigue us.