

accessible and rigorous examination of a timely issue. The book's central argument that the past shapes the present will not be surprising to historians. But *Deep Roots* should help serve as a corrective to political and social science scholarship that too often relegates history to the margins.

Ark Encounter: The Making of a Creationist Theme Park. By James S. Bielo. New York: New York University Press, 2018. Pp. x+225. \$89.00 (cloth); \$28.00 (paper).

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In recent years, a number of religious tourist sites, such as the Creation Museum in Kentucky and the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., have risen to national prominence. In *Ark Encounter: The Making of a Creationist Theme Park*, James S. Bielo presents an ethnographic study of once such destination—the Ark Encounter, a recreation of Noah's ark located in Kentucky that opened in 2016. In the book, Bielo uses participant observation of the Ark Encounter's creative team, visits to the completed venue, and information about related sites, such as the Creation Museum, to provide a broad view of how creationist religious entertainment is produced. Throughout the book, Bielo's primary goal, as noted in the introduction, is to demonstrate "how this form of religious publicity mobilizes the strategies and imperatives of modern entertainment to claim cultural legitimacy and authority" (p. 3). Bielo further demonstrates that while creationism has typically been approached by scholars through the frame of religion and science, the frame of religion and entertainment is also appropriate, particularly for understanding creationist museums and theme parks such as the Ark Encounter.

The book opens with a discussion of how the Ark Encounter serves as an example of "materializing the Bible" (p. 32). Bielo notes that sites that materialize the Bible transform biblical text into an experiential environment and provide visitors with a sense of direct access to the past. Bielo suggests that by doing so these sites resolve what he considers to be a problem of Christian authenticity—that contemporary American Christians are geographically and historically removed from key events in the development of Christianity. He then goes on to discuss four types of sites that materialize the Bible in this way: biblical gardens, creation museums, biblical history museums, and recreations of biblical scenes and locations.

The idea of materializing the Bible works well for understanding the Ark Encounter, and the idea of "materializing" scriptures and beliefs could be applied more broadly to pilgrimage sites and religious entertainment destinations in other religious traditions, such as Hinduism. However, the idea that authenticity is a key problem for contemporary Christians seems underdeveloped and would benefit from further exploration, particularly in

light of research indicating that although American evangelicals do not have direct access to the time of Jesus, they perceive themselves as having direct access to God (Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* [Oxford University Press, 2005]; T. M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* [Knopf, 2012]).

In the next section of the book, Bielo discusses the design and production of the Ark Encounter by a creative team of four artists. The data in this section come from Bielo's ethnographic observations of the artists' design work; the appendix provides important information on his access to the creative team and is useful for understanding the scope of his data.

The book then moves to the Ark Encounter itself. Bielo first discusses how the site is intended to work as a tool for religious conversion, by demonstrating the plausibility of descriptions of the ark in the biblical book of Genesis and providing visitors with an immersive, emotion-precipitating experience. In achieving these goals, creative designers of the Ark Encounter must integrate two fields—modern entertainment and Protestant fundamentalism. In discussing how the site must function as entertainment, Bielo ties this research to that of other researchers who write about the importance of *play* in religious conversion. He also provides interesting insights into the dilemmas caused by combining these two fields, such as the need to remain true to biblical descriptions while also ensuring a family-friendly environment.

Bielo extends his analysis of creationist entertainment design to an exhibit on dragons at the Creation Museum (owned by the same organization as the Ark Encounter). Here he discusses how creationists engage in production of history, using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of fields to analyze the struggle over representations of history between heterodox creationists and orthodox evolutionists. In his discussion of both the Ark Encounter and the dragon exhibit, Bielo notes that this struggle informs production decisions, such as the designers' desire for exhibits to match professional standards.

The book ends with a visit to the completed Ark Encounter. Bielo discusses how the completed site serves to immerse visitors in a "creationist past" (p. 144) while simultaneously immersing them in modern creationist views and into a conflict between creation and evolution. He notes that through its aesthetic decisions and high-quality exhibits, the Ark Encounter hopes to be perceived as different from religious "kitsch." This includes a brief discussion of taste judgments made toward American creationists and connections to class. This is another topic introduced in the book that has great potential for additional development. Bourdieu's theories on taste judgment are not used here but would seem to be a natural fit.

One of the most useful contributions of *Ark Encounter* is that it complicates the religion versus science view of creationism by introducing entertainment, production of history, and taste and aesthetic judgment as analytic tools. This allows for a rich, nuanced understanding of creationist cultural products such as the Ark Encounter. It also provides many avenues for further

research, including examining audience reactions to the Ark Encounter, as well as further developing ideas and theories introduced here. Ultimately, this book will be of interest to scholars interested in creationism, American evangelicals and cultural production, debates about religion and science, and the combination of religion, entertainment, and tourism.

Transit Life: How Commuting Is Transforming Our Cities. By David Bissell. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2018. Pp. xxxvii+224. \$99.00 (cloth); \$35.00 (paper).

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Imagine that you purchased a work of fiction entitled *Who Killed Mable Lee Williams?* A crime-mystery-who-done-it-thriller to be sure. You read the entire book, chapter upon chapter, following every detail, every turn of the case, increasingly eager to learn the identity of the offender. “This author is skilled at the craft,” you think to yourself. Hours go by, days go by. You are absorbed in the minutia of the events. Finally you get to the last chapter, the moment of the great reveal. This ever-building tension is soon to be released as the crime is solved.

Except it isn’t. At the end of the book, in that last chapter, you are simply told that it could be several different people. The case is complicated, the author writes, and indeed may never be solved.

In such an instance, you might well think you have been cheated out of time and money you could have invested elsewhere. This is akin to how I experienced David Bissell’s *Transit Life*. Despite some excellent research and fascinating descriptions, it does not seem to have any conclusion, any punchline, any “and this is what we have learned” culmination. It is a song without a hook. Allow me to explain.

Commuting is a major component of city life. It is difficult to imagine cities apart from the mass movement of people daily ebbing and flowing through the city from residence to work and school and back again. We cannot grasp social life in cities without careful study of this practice so central to so many people. For all its importance, however, we have a relative dearth of in-depth studies on commuting, especially, as the subtitle of this book promises, on how commuting is transforming our cities. I was eager to know.

I followed this book from beginning to end. I noted the intriguing array of methods used—interviews of commuters across transit types, time-lapse photography and analysis, two-week-long “living the life of a commuter” participant observations, and interviews with an impressive array of transit people, from the ever-present radio traffic reporter to transit bloggers to elected officials to planners. I noted (if not fully understood) the easy, straightforward