

conceptions of “discourse.” Therefore, the authors agree that ideology encompasses more than conscious worldview and sectarian interests, and their attempts to move beyond false consciousness foregrounds how ideology infuses habitual behavior, is embodied in ritual performances, and is reified in the material and spatial sinews of social existence.

Nevertheless, the differing perspectives of the contributors still tend to align with one of these two traditions or with the third stream of ideology studies that perceives ideology as consisting of explicit and plural stances advancing the political interest of competing social factions. For many anthropologists, a practice becomes ideological when its iniquitous social effects are championed, challenged, or questioned, a viewpoint that differs from Engels’s original formulation that full knowledge of the relations of production would herald an end to ideology. Indeed, the more compelling chapters (Susan Alt, Susan Kus and Victor Raharijaona, Ruth Van Dyke) are those that mobilize a somewhat narrower conceptualization of the term, recognizing that not every practice is reducible to power, thus leaving room for other heuristics including culture, memory, and related structuring dispositions not directly related to the reproduction of inequalities. Thus, many of the authors treat ideology as a conscious struggle over the production of meaning, while still recognizing that the taken-for-granted contours of social life sets the preconditions for political conflict (Uzi Baram, Matthew David Cochran and Paul Mullins, Christopher Matthews and Kurt Jordan). Susan Kus and Victor Raharijaona demonstrate, for instance, that the ideological valence of the traditional house of the Malagasy Highlands differed significantly within changing social contexts.

On the whole, the authors successfully demonstrate that the analytical power of ideology lies in its protean meanings and applications. Vicente Lull and colleagues argue that Colin Renfrew’s theory on the emergence of megalithic monuments in Atlantic Europe betrays the influence of capitalist ideology. However, Renfrew was unlikely conscious of the capitalist biases underlying his explanation that scarcity, competition, and demographic pressure underwrote the construction of the megaliths, revealing the

difficulty of reducing the ideological simply to conscious struggles over beliefs and values. The same could be said of Reinhardt Bernbeck and Randall McGuire’s critique of post-processual archaeologists’ elevation of agency and practice as founded on neoliberal ideologies of consumer choice—a thought-provoking but perhaps not entirely fair characterization. Kathleen Sterling’s fascinating chapter on how archaeologists have tended to reduce Paleolithic hunter-gatherers to rationalizing *homo economicus* provides yet another example of how capitalist ideologies have compromised archaeological inference. As further intimated by Ruth Van Dyke, archaeologists obsessed with the agency of things are perhaps guilty of fetishizing commodities in the classic sense of Marx and Georg Lukács. In this vein, and to subject a few of the chapters to their own ideological critique, Susan Pollock’s argument that decorated female figurines resisted Akkadian conquest in Susiana poses the danger of essentializing past social difference in terms of present-day ideological conflicts, thus eliding the historical particulars of Mesopotamian identity politics. Bettina Arnold similarly examines Hallstatt funerary rites as expressive of competition and agonistic political contests, a viewpoint that disregards other possibilities, including cosmologies of death and sacred landscapes in Iron Age Europe. In fact, Bernbeck and McGuire’s amplification of *ideology* to encompass all domains of social practice demonstrates how archaeological interpretations are invariably conditioned by the historical context in which they are formulated—an overarching thesis of the collective articles. To be sure, the tremendous force of capitalist ideology should not blind us to the existence of alternate (and perhaps not so overdetermined) political worlds.

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Emerging Evangelicals: Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity

James S. Bielo. New York: New York University Press, 2011. 256 pp.

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Emerging Evangelicals is an ethnographic portrait of a network of Christians seeking “authentic faith,” who want to avoid the pitfalls of commodification within evangelical culture. James

Bielo defines an “Emerging Evangelical” as one who participates in the “cultural critique” of “mainstream” evangelicalism as overly consumerist and focused on megachurches, while preferring small communities that foster “authentic” relationships within churches, families, and neighborhoods. Recounting narratives of “deconversion” from conservative

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3 evangelicalism, Bielo traverses a loose urban network of
4 largely white, middle-class, urban, male clergy who moved
5 to Cincinnati with a mission.

6 Bielo focuses on three characteristics of emerging evan-
7 gelicalism: (1) drawing from the Christian past to create
8 an “ancient-future” approach to ritual and worship; (2) a
9 “missional” mapping and inhabiting of local neighborhoods
10 as spaces of everyday labor for Christ’s “Kingdom”; and
11 (3) “church planting” based on a model of a young, mar-
12 ried man who, with his wife’s help, settles into a neigh-
13 borhood to lead a house church, an after-school program,
14 or a conventional church. Bielo offers fine-grained de-
15 scriptions of several emerging evangelicals, arguing that
16 their cultural critique is part of a deep-rooted “dialogic”
17 Christianity.

18 Bielo describes his approach as “person-centered ethnog-
19 raphy,” in which he avoids granting agency to concepts such
20 as habitus or ideology in a commitment to the premise that
21 “cultures do not act; people, individually and collectively,
22 do” (p. 27). Granting autonomy to the people one is study-
23 ing makes sense, but too much of a theoretical commitment
24 to individual agency could be read as an evangelical Protes-
25 tant conviction in itself. Evangelicals such as Billy Graham
26 and Martin Luther King Jr. advanced bold cultural critiques;
27 however, their theological arguments, rhetorical gifts, and
28 communal dreams were never external to formations that
29 one might call ideology, gender, or habitus.

30 Bielo depicts emerging evangelicals as critics focused
31 on megachurch evangelicalism as their Other; their critical
32 targets also include capitalist consumerism, cities versus sub-
33 urbs, white privilege, and liturgical memory. Showing their
34 engagement with these cultural and theological critiques,
35 Bielo pays less attention to their critical disinterest in other
36 cultural formations, such as masculine heterosexual author-
37 ity and the missiological conviction to convert Cincinnati to
38 the reign of Christ. To balance his interest in agency above
39 cultural formations, Bielo might have drawn on literature
40 on religion and subject formation to set the critical choices
41 of the “evangelical person” within particular prescriptive
42 regimes.

43 Bielo shows that emerging evangelicals hope to bring
44 the “Kingdom of God” to Cincinnati by mapping, walking,
45 and inhabiting the local. Many had taken a “vow of stability”
46 under which they committed to stay in Cincinnati for the
47 duration of their lives, hoping that this commitment would
48 help challenge the “racial dystopia” of the urban United
49 States (p. 155). According to one church planter: “My job
50 is to find out what these people’s deepest fears are. And
51 my job is to find out what their greatest hopes are. And
52 then I need to show them why Christ is *more than* either
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one of those” (p. 187). Interestingly, the entrepreneurial
mapping these church planters do when writing “propos-
als” for mission funding from national organizations echoes
19th-century Christian missions to Ohio discussed by Amy
DeRogatis in *Moral Geography* (2003). In both cases, maps
were at once imperial and evangelical, providing a blueprint
for why the previous inhabitants needed to change or move
aside.

Bielo paints an image of emerging evangelicals as white
men with neat beards, gentle voices, and “tattoos displayed
conspicuously on muscular arms” (pp. 144, 159). Some em-
body a “hyper-masculinity” (p. 158) that reflects their the-
ology of gender “complementarianism” in which the New
Testament ordains men as leaders in church and home.
Bielo suggests that their conservative view of gender is soft-
ened by their perpetual state of “ironic” emerging, as their
hypermasculinity “becomes a resource for reflexive, self-
deprecating humor” (p. 159). Exploring the limits of this
self-deprecation would be revealing. For example, detailing
the “incarnational” approach to monastic-inspired commu-
nity of Kevin, a house church pastor, Bielo discusses Kevin’s
blog, subtitled “Unpimp and remonk.” Left unremarked is
that Kevin, a married man, has chosen two extremes of
masculine sexuality—the pimp who sells access to women’s
sexuality and the monk who forbids all access to his own
sexual pleasure—to represent his “authentic” faith.

Emerging Evangelicals provoked this question for me:
What is cultural critique? Defining emerging evangelicals via
their commitment to critique the conservative evangelical-
ism that bore them, Bielo shows this is a complicated family
drama. He might have gone further in setting these family
battles in a wider historical and cultural compass. Gaining
anthropological perspective on the tensions and contradic-
tions within any cultural critique requires a willingness to
go beyond the immanent critique that one’s interlocutors
practice without forgetting one’s own critical limits. Bielo
goes partway to acknowledging his proximity to his subjects
(p. 139), and it would have been helpful to learn more. That
said, *Emerging Evangelicals* demonstrates how understanding
particular Christianities as traditions of cultural critique can
clarify their fraught relations with “worldliness” both within
and without the church. Accessibly written and relatively
compact, the book would be appropriate for undergraduate
classes focused on anthropological approaches to Christianity
in North America.

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