concedes that civil, internal peace might be purchased at the expense of external contention (foreign wars or deadly viruses readily serve as the object of bipartisan enmity, for example). Whether Hobbes is right to be so ambitious is another question, but insofar as Hobbes asserts that democratic assemblies wield sovereign power legitimately, the "antipolitical" risk seems to threaten even where the sovereign is democratically represented, if in less obvious ways.

Perhaps paradoxically, it is in the book's final section—acknowledged to be an engagement that goes beyond Hobbes's authorial intentions—that we get the clearest analysis of the substantive strictures that shape Hobbes's vision. Having gutted natural law of its traditional content, Hobbes supplies a positive desire for self-preservation, liberty, and political participation that coalesce to provide grounds for preferencing democracy. Holman's rejection of Hobbes's critique leads him to imagine deliberative spaces and institutions that can produce "reasonably accepted decisions whose legitimacy is affirmed by each participant" (174). Yet, insofar as this provides the *unified* basis for a sovereign *will*, expressed in shared political institutions, it is unclear how far Holman's reconfiguration really is from Hobbes's original offering. Perhaps this simply means Holman succeeds in convincing his reader of Hobbes's democratic credentials, but one must ask whether Holman's imaginary really permits a serious risk that the multitude remains or will reemerge at any moment. Either way, Holman's engrossing study has plenty to commend it to those with interests in Hobbes's thought and democratic theory alike. It underscores Hobbes's continued relevance in a provocative and interesting way, and it shows this famous advocate of monarchy to be a curiously helpful interlocutor for democratic theorists, even today.

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Alex Zakaras: *The Roots of American Individualism: Political Myth in the Age of Jackson*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022. Pp. x, 418.)

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The era named for Andrew Jackson remains poorly understood by most Americans. This lack of knowledge is unfortunate, especially considering how important the decades between the War of 1812 and the US-Mexican War are to understanding the nation's development. Even more problematic is the mythologizing of Old Hickory by pundits who favorably compare

modern presidents to Jackson and scholars who cling to the erroneous idea that he was a self-made western frontiersman.

This latter claim about self-made men is one of the three foundational myths—the other two being those of the independent proprietor and of the rights bearer—that Alex Zakaras identifies as originating in the Jacksonian era and that continue to influence the United States even today. Foundational myths, he argues, "construct a glorified image of a national people and present it as a worthy object of devotion and sacrifice" (12). The self-made man, for example, lived in a "fluid and classless" society where "those who failed to get ahead . . . had no one but themselves to blame" (17). The independent proprietor owned either their own small business or, more frequently, their own land. This ownership provided them with freedom of thought and investment in the long-term stability of the government. The rights bearer possessed natural rights and "freedom from political and ecclesiastical oppression" (17). According to Zakaras, these three overlapping myths provided an ethos in which Americans of different political persuasions, socioeconomic classes, races, ethnicities, genders, and so forth could debate what made their nation unique compared to the rest of the world, but especially Europe. They also allowed for a utopian interpretation of the United States, one in which independent individuals could work hard and succeed via God-given natural laws as long as the government stayed out of the way.

Andrew Jackson has often been held up as the epitome of all three foundational myths, but a realistic examination of his life illustrates the irony of his symbolism in this regard. Jackson helped found the Democratic Party, which was based on the Jeffersonian ideal of independent white yeoman farmers who not only were free from the corrupt aristocracy but fought against it. He was not one of those farmers, though; in fact, he was an enslaver (like Thomas Jefferson) who owned several plantations and exerted mastery over hundreds of enslaved African Americans throughout his lifetime. Nevertheless, Jackson drew those farmers into his political coalition by using the myth of the independent proprietor to combat the "bankers, industrialists, and land speculators" who threatened their independence (57). He also employed white supremacy to distinguish independent white farmers from the dependency of enslaved African Americans.

When it came to the rights-bearer myth, Jackson and his fellow Democrats accepted and vehemently defended the labor theory of property, which said "that all legitimate title to property comes originally from individual labor" (110). Only in this way could someone truly possess their natural rights. In many regards, Jackson himself represented the antithesis of the rights-bearer myth. Yes, he fought against the Second Bank of the United States, casting himself as the hero in the fight against a corrupt financial entity that allowed for "the advancement of the few at the expense of the many" (Andrew Jackson, Bank veto message, July 10, 1832). But Jackson's wealth

came on the backs of enslaved laborers, who were deprived of the fruits of their labor and who worked on land taken violently from Native Americans.

Jackson's dependence on other people for his success demonstrates the intellectual bankruptcy of casting him as the embodiment of the self-made-man myth. In addition to relying on enslaved labor, he was only able to move up in society through his marriage into a wealthy family (the Donelsons), which provided him with opportunities to become a land speculator—identified in the era's myth making as one of the primary enemies of the independent proprietor and rights bearer. Jackson's extended kinship networks also allowed him to build patron-client relationships that economically and politically benefited both himself and those who were beholden to him. Self-made? Hardly.

Zakaras points out that while these three myths often worked to the detriment of Americans who were not white men, they also provided a language that reformers used to argue for change. Abolitionists, for example, utilized the myths of the independent proprietor and the rights bearer to argue for the end of slavery and the political and economic empowerment of African Americans. Women likewise used the myth of the rights bearer to advocate for access to suffrage. Meanwhile, the Democrats' political opponents, the Whigs, argued that government action, often denounced by Democrats in their interpretation of the foundational myths, was necessary to achieve independence, protect rights, and ensure success.

Zakaras's final two chapters extend his argument, in brief form, into the Gilded Age and up through the early twenty-first century. Doing so expands the reach of this book beyond scholars of the Jacksonian era to anyone interested in a contemporary understanding of the contradictions of Americans' claims about independence and rights and their actions in subverting those principles. There are several important takeaways from the concluding chapter, but I will highlight only two. One is that the equating of white male supremacy with the individualism constructed on the three foundational myths has been a major source of injustice for people of color and women. A second is the "pure fantasy" of the free market and the idea that the United States is "a pure meritocracy" (275, 277), both of which fictions Zakaras traces back to the three foundational myths.

This immensely rich book makes an important contribution to US intellectual history and deserves more than one reading to unearth all of its many insights.

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