

have the English experience could not adopt English institutions. If they did, they were likely to fail” (p. 96). The chapters in Part III show just how difficult it is to try to import English liberties, institutions, or traditions as well as the ideas of a thinker who was steeped in them, like Oakeshott. For example, Zhang Rulan’s essay “Oakeshott in China” suggests that Oakeshott’s traditionalist approach would have limited appeal there because “most modern Chinese are antitraditionalists. They do not believe that tradition can give useful intimations” (p. 142). He further observes “the Chinese are political rationalists in Oakeshott’s sense. They desire to ‘get a crib, a political doctrine’” (p. 149). Sungmoon Kim in the chapter “Confucian Constitutionalism” does find a genuine Chinese tradition to draw upon, and then develops an effective Oakeshottian critique of Jian Qing’s Confucianist understanding of the state; yet, in doing so, he shows how great the distance of ideas drawn from that Chinese tradition is from those of Oakeshott. Bi Hwan Kim identifies a final paradox in his discussion of Oakeshott and Korea. Not only is Korean politics highly ideological and rationalist, he suggests, but this means reformers must “also adopt a rationalist approach to realize their aims” (p. 183). Oakeshott might help identify this situation and its limitations for Kim, but again it reveals no real home for an authentically Oakeshottian politics.

While this volume might not find a clearer view of Oakeshott through the lens of Cold War and post-Cold War politics and theorists, the essays that wrestle through these topics are insightful nonetheless. They freshly highlight aspects of his work and show where moving beyond Oakeshott might be possible and necessary. Finally they raise an important question about a theorist of the style of Oakeshott. If he was largely a thinker of the West and primarily concerned with the unique tradition of liberty, law, and the human individual in the European and English speaking world, as he came to know it in the 20th century, then what are the limits of his ideas? Are they bound by what he thought they might be? The customs of law and liberty that Oakeshott understood as uniquely English were, as he well knew, the result of centuries’ long fusion of Roman, German, and Anglo-Saxon legal and political traditions. Such incorporation does not occur simply, easily, or equally and neither does the resulting amalgam look the same as in the various countries of origin. However, some new tradition comes of it. Might we now understand traditions of law and political experience to be new fusions of Western and Chinese, or Western and Korean, or Western and whatever region that has been subject to imperialist politics and globalizing economic and social pressures? This volume of essays with its bold attempt to move beyond the usual discussions of Oakeshott, may point out one way to bring a uniquely 20th Century thinker to these 21st Century problems.

Fighting over the Founders: How We Remember the American Revolution. By Andrew M. Schocket. New York:

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— Michael Zuckert, *University of Notre Dame*

Andrew Schocket begins with a familiar idea: History is politics conducted by other means. He aims to reveal how Americans’ efforts to present the revolution in various genres and formats conform to this adage. Schocket, an American Revolution historian, came “to realize” that his work was conducted “in a context in which anything written or spoken about the American Revolution inherently holds political and cultural implications” (p. 2). He is not among those historians who believe that the past is “dead,” lying there as a specimen awaiting purely objective study. “We live in the founders’ world, just as they live in ours” (p. 4). We live in a world of meanings, one in which our reality is defined not merely by “objective facts” but by things like our understandings of the Founders’ understandings of the meaning of America. They live in our world so far as their meanings mean for us; we live in their world so far as our meanings—and political contests—shape our grasps of them. Though the revolution “might be long over . . . it’s not settled” (p. 3). Our views of it are shaped by our preconceptions; our preconceptions are shaped by it. The past, especially such an identity-defining aspect of the past as the American Revolution, is a prize object of political contestation: “[O]wnership of an authoritative past provides a powerful political rhetorical weapon” (p. 7).

Schocket is taking the “American Revolution” in a capacious sense—the whole era between the beginning of the colonial conflict with Britain (the Stamp Act of 1765) through to the ratification of the Constitution in 1788 (p. 10). The scope of *Fighting over the Founders* might be better captured in a term like “the founding era.” Part of the book explores the familiar theme that the various disagreements among the historians about the past often have something to do with the historian’s present, as was so clearly the case with the Progressive historians.

Schocket spends only a little time on the professional historians, however, and instead considers things like the rhetoric of presidential candidates and the portrayal of the founding and the Founders in film, television, popular books, theme parks, museums, and so on. He turns to these materials because they are the places where the American people imbibe the history of the founding, rather than in the narrowly circulated works of the professionals. (Of course, he recognizes that the people who produce these popular materials are influenced by the professional historians).

Some political scientists will find Schocket’s work of interest because he pursues his hermeneutical themes in a very empirical manner. His first substantive chapter is given over to what politicians say about the founding and Founders in their campaigning. He constructed a large database, constituted by “a large sample of the . . . statements of all

the Democratic and Republican presidential primary candidates” (p. 20). He then conducted a content analysis by searching for “a variety of terms, names, dates, and phrases that relate to the American Revolution,” allowing him to present his findings in strictly quantitative terms (p. 21).

As in the rest of the book, Schocket sets himself fairly strict temporal limits—the twenty-first century. Thus, he considers what politicians seeking the presidency from 2000 to the present have to say, what is on offer in that same period at historical sites (like Colonial Williamsburg), what has aired on television (like HBO’s *John Adams*), and what have been blockbuster best-selling books (like David McCullough’s *John Adams* (2001)). That temporal limitation makes Schocket’s project manageable. It also supplies a kind of immediacy to the project. If the point is to reveal how history is politics by other means, how better to show that than within the politics in which we, the reading audience of the book, are operating? The choice to limit himself to twenty-first-century materials also has its costs. The meaning of the founding *for us* in the twenty-first century would benefit from comparison with, for example, the uses (and abuses) of the founding in the nineteenth-century ante bellum period, when much of the debate over slavery and states’ rights was fought out as a battle for “ownership of the past.” Likewise, some more widely comparative material would be useful. How do the French “fight over their founding,” over the French Revolution, for example? Such comparisons would very likely have an impact on his findings and on his categories of analysis.

In order to organize the empirical findings of his research, Schocket deploys two categories of analysis: “essentialism” and “organicism”: “Essentialism relies on the assumption that there was one American Revolution led by demigods, resulting in an inspired governmental structure and leaving a legacy from which straying would be treason and result in the nation’s ruin. The essentialist view suggests a concept of history as a single text with one discernible meaning and so is inherently conservative in its outlook and in its prescriptions . . . which often emphasize private property, capitalism, traditional gender roles, and protestant Christianity” (p. 4). The essentialists portray the revolution “as having one true, knowable, unchanging meaning for us now and forever: an essence” (p. 5).

As to the other view of revolutionary history: “For organicists, there are many pasts that may share elements but no one fixed truth. Rather the past must be interpreted to be understood” (p. 5). Thus, Schocket clearly stands as an organicist; his book is conceived in the very spirit of organicism. Organicists can develop different but “equally compelling conceptions” of the history (ibid.). Organicists believe that “Americans are in the process of trying to complete a Revolution that the founders left unfinished.” They face “the never-ending task of perfecting the union through an inclusive multiculturalism that looks to celebrate historical agency in the Revolutionary era” (ibid.).

It is unfortunate that these two concepts are forced into such a central role in this otherwise informative and interesting book, for these are not well-constructed concepts. They clearly find their birth in a certain (questionable) conception of our contemporary political divisions, with the essentialists derived from the Glenn Beck wing of the Republican Party and the organicists from the multiculturalist, identity politics wing of the Democrats. Were this book a melodrama, the audience would be cued to boo when an essentialist stepped on stage. Apart from the crudeness and transparent political bias of the categories, there is the ever-present danger that imposing such a priori categories on the empirical evidence will distort and too greatly predetermine the interpretation of the evidence.

Moreover, these are not good categories in that they contain disparate elements that are not inherently connected, and they are not mutually exclusive in actuality. Thus, for example, essentialism is both a statement about the nature of historical knowledge (there is one fixed truth) *and* about the substance of historical knowledge (the Founders were demigods, their founding a perfect success). It is easy to see that these two aspects of essentialism are quite separable and, indeed, many of those classified as essentialists by Schocket adhere to part of the other definition but not to both. At the same time, one can easily adhere to parts of both the essentialist and the organicist conceptions. Consider Abraham Lincoln: he treated the Founders as demigods and their founding action as highly admirable and authoritative, and the truth about their founding clear and “fixed” (whatever that means), but he also saw the American Revolution as evolving and expanding. The blurriness of Schocket’s categories shows itself in the many places where he is forced to classify items or writers as sharing in both categories.

It must be said, however, that Schocket often rises above the limitations of his categories. In applying them, he is more supple and nuanced than the original categories would suggest. This seems to be a book in which the author learned as he went along, and at the end he is more open-minded, more appreciative of the efforts of the various parties he has discussed and ready to move on beyond his imperfect categories of analysis.

The Mind of James Madison: The Legacy of Classical Republicanism. By Colleen A. Sheehan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 275p. \$ 95.00 cloth
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— Alissa M. Ardito, *Yale University*

It is commonly supposed that the genius of the founding fathers (though this expression partakes of more than a little *romanitas*) lies partly in their conscious break from the classical past. Surely, the discussion of classical republics in *The Federalist* stresses that such polities offered more in the way of flaws to avoid, rather than examples to be imitated. Among the other benefits of *The Mind of James Madison*, it